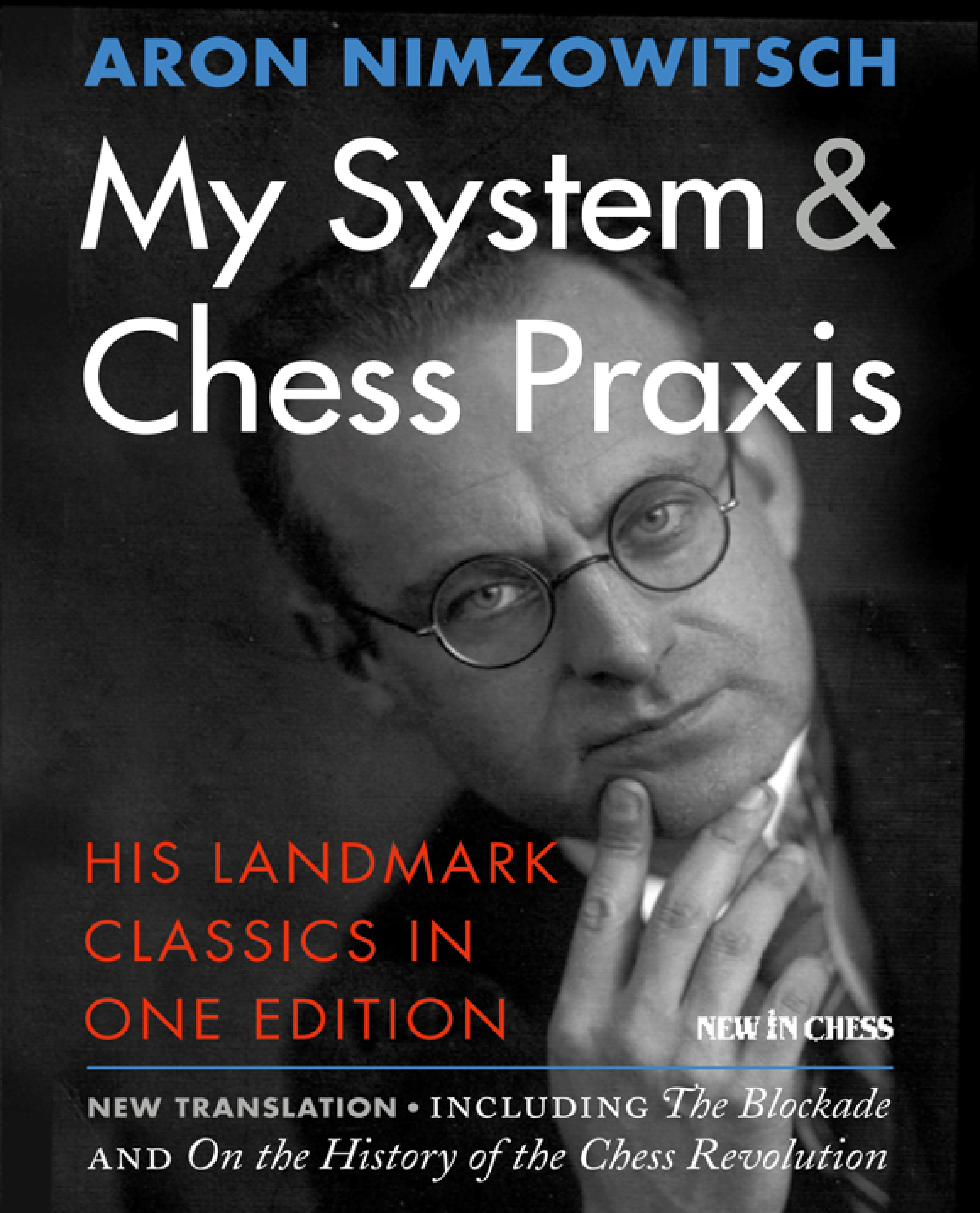
ARON NIMZOWITSCH

My System & Chess Praxis



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AND *On the History of the Chess Revolution*

My System & Chess Praxis

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Aron Nimzowitsch

My System & Chess Praxis

Translated by Robert Sherwood

New In Chess 2016

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Translator’s Preface

It is a pleasure to help bring out this new, combined edition of Nimzowitsch. A fresh translation has been necessary for some time, and we can all be grateful to New In Chess for publishing it.

I have kept as closely as possible to the meaning and feel of the original German text. The serious reader is owed a faithful rendering of the man’s thinking and attitude rather than the simplified and paraphrased versions that are sometimes preferred. This pays handsome dividends in a considerably deeper experience of the material and the man.

Nimzowitsch, for all his depth and his idiosyncratic way of writing, makes a conscious effort to be clear and helpful, and often exudes a human warmth toward the reader that the more technical and bloodless renderings of his work fail to convey. Nimzowitsch is an interesting guy. He is profound, emotionally sensitive to the point of an almost dangerous vulnerability, refuses to suffer fools gladly, despises provincialism and dogma, and feels it his mission to penetrate into the inner truth of chess out of a deeply felt respect for the authenticity of that truth. Nimzowitsch detests the superficiality and superciliousness of pseudo-professional ‘thinking’. His was a three-dimensional sensibility in a mostly two-dimensional world. In this he is situated squarely in the company of other early twentieth-century figures who also struggled to liberate us from the categorical judgments and smug self-satisfaction of much nineteenth-century thinking. Nimzowitsch himself is not without his inconsistencies, exaggerations, and occasional immature defensiveness, and one comes across errors from time to time. But, as the saying goes, the mistakes of great men are more venerable than the successes of lesser ones.

In making the translation I often referred to the version by Philip Hereford (1929). Hereford's is for the most part a quite respectable rendering of Nimzowitsch; I certainly have admired his skill at unraveling some of the denser sentences. Its defect lies in its omission of certain passages that were evidently considered to be of questionable relevance or taste. In 1929 this was a defensible position; today we prefer our texts uncensored and authentic. The version before you is frank, unflinching, occasionally hard-edged, and at times marvelously soulful and warm. It is the real Nimzowitsch.

We have chosen to include Nimzowitsch's *The Blockade* and his very interesting article *On the History of the Chess Revolution 1911-1914*. *The Blockade* is a two-part monograph originally published in *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* in 1925. *Revolution* provides essential background for understanding the inner currents of the Neo-Romantic movement. The latter article was already included as an appendix in the original German book *Mein System*. *The Blockade* was not included in either of the two books, and some of the games in this article later appeared in *Mein System*. We have decided to leave those games where they were – again, this reflects our attempts to keep as close as possible to the original works.

Thanks are due to Jeremy Silman for the original impetus to produce an unvarnished Nimzowitsch suitable for the serious contemporary reader. Dale Brandreth at Caissa Editions provided the German texts. Allard Hoogland at New In Chess has handled the tasks of publication with his usual courtesy and skill. And Nimzowitsch deserves our gratitude for his insights and for his courage in holding his ground while the flak was coming in from all directions.

Bob Sherwood
Dummerston, Vermont, USA
May, 2016

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My System

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Foreword

As a rule I do not care for writing forewords. But in this case one would appear to be necessary, for the entire matter before us is so innovative and unprecedented that a foreword can only be a welcome ‘mediator’ for the reader.

My new system did not come into being all of a sudden, but developed slowly and gradually; I might say it has been the result of an organic growth. It is true that the principal idea – that of analysing the elements of chess strategy individually – is based on inspiration. And yet of course it would by no means be sufficient for me to point out, about an open file, say, that one must take possession of it and make the most of it; or, concerning a passed pawn, that one has to stop it. No, the matter before us demands that we go into it in detail. It might almost sound comical, but I can assure you, my dear reader, that for me the passed pawn has a soul just as a human being does. It has wishes that slumber unrecognized within it and has fears of whose existence ‘it hardly suspects’. The same is true for the pawn chain and the other elements of chess strategy. I will give you a series of laws and rules for each of these elements that you will be able to apply, rules that I will go into in great detail and which will help clarify even the most seemingly arcane links between events that occur frequently on our beloved 64 squares.

Part II of the book discusses positional play, especially in its Neo-Romantic form. It is often said that I am the father of the Neo-Romantic school. So it will not be uninteresting to hear what I have to say on the subject.

Textbooks tend to be written in a dry and lifeless tone. It is believed we would be giving up something were we to let in a humorful turn of phrase, for what business would light-heartedness have in a textbook on chess! This is an outlook I cannot even begin to share. I will go further: I regard such a viewpoint as completely wrong. Real humor often contains more inner truth than the most earnest seriousness. For my part, I am a declared adherent of using comparisons with everyday life to comic effect. I am therefore ready to call upon the experiences of life to make comparisons so as to reach a clear understanding of the complex processes inherent in chess.

In many places I have provided a schema to make the mental edifice clear in a visible way. I took this step for pedagogical reasons as well as reasons of personal safety, for otherwise, mediocre critics – there are such people – would be able or willing to see only the individual details but not the wider ramifications of the conceptual framework that forms the real content of my book. The individual items, especially in the first part of the book, are seemingly very simple – but that is precisely what is meritorious about them. Having reduced the chaos to a certain number of rules involving inter-connected causal relations, that is just what I think I may be proud of. How simple the five special cases in the play on the seventh and eighth ranks sound, but how difficult they were to educe from the chaos! Or the open files and even the pawn chain! Naturally each new part was more difficult to think through, as the book was organized in a ‘progressive’ way. But this increasing difficulty I did not hold before me as, say, armor to protect myself against attacks from small-caliber critics. I emphasize this only for the sake of the reader. I will also be attacked for giving illustrative games played for the most part by myself. But such attacks, too, will hardly bowl me over. How could I not be justified in illustrating my system through my own games? Incidentally, I am in fact publishing a few (well-played) amateur games as well, so I am not all that self-indulgent.

I now hand this first installment over for publication. I do so in good conscience. My book will have its defects – I was unable to illuminate all the corners of chess strategy – but I flatter myself of having written the first real textbook of chess and not merely of the openings.

The Author, August 1925

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Part I – The Elements

Introduction

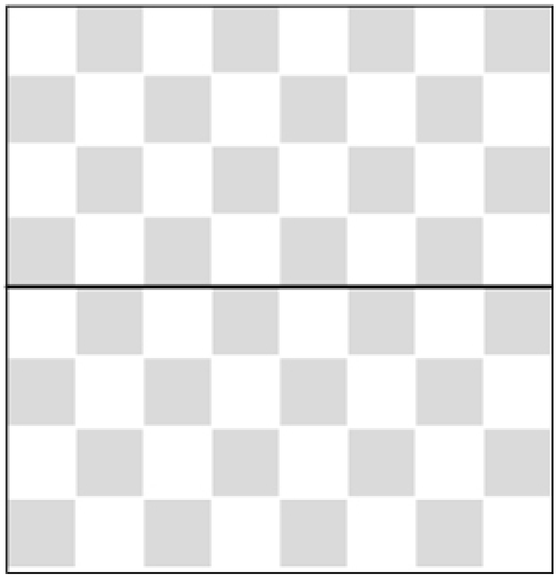
In my view the following are to be considered the elements of chess strategy: (1) The center; (2) open files; (3) play on the seventh and eighth ranks; (4) the passed pawn; (5) the pin; (6) the discovered check; (7) exchanging; and (8) the pawn chain.

In the following pages each of these will be explained as thoroughly as possible. We begin with the center, which for now we shall treat with the less-experienced player in mind. In Part II of this book, devoted to positional play, we shall attempt to examine the center from the standpoint of 'higher' knowledge. As you know, the center was just the point where, in the years 1911-1913, a revolution in chess took place. I am referring to the articles I wrote, such as 'Is Dr. Tarrasch's 'Modern Chess' Really a Modern Conception of the Game?', which took up arms precisely against the traditional conception of the center and which signified a revolt, that is, the emergence of the Neo-Romantic school. Hence our two-part treatment of the center, which we propose on pedagogical grounds, would seem to be justified.

First a few definitions.

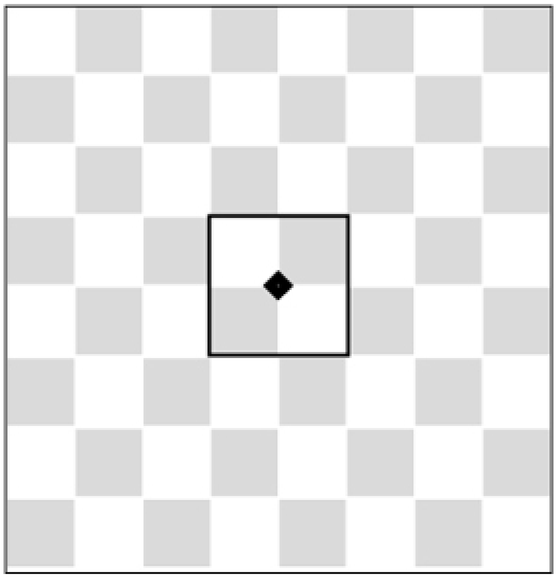
The line drawn in Diagram 1 we shall call the *frontier line* – 'line' of course understood in a mathematical and not chess sense. The point marked on Diagram 2 is the midpoint of the board, again of course in the mathematical sense. The midpoint is easy to determine: it is located at the intersection of the long diagonals.

1



The frontier line

2



The midpoint. The small quadrant is the center

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Chapter 1

The Center and Development

1. By development is to be understood the strategic advance of the troops to the frontier line

This process is analogous to the advance at the outset of a war. Both belligerent armies seek to reach the frontier line as quickly as they can in order if possible to penetrate into enemy territory.

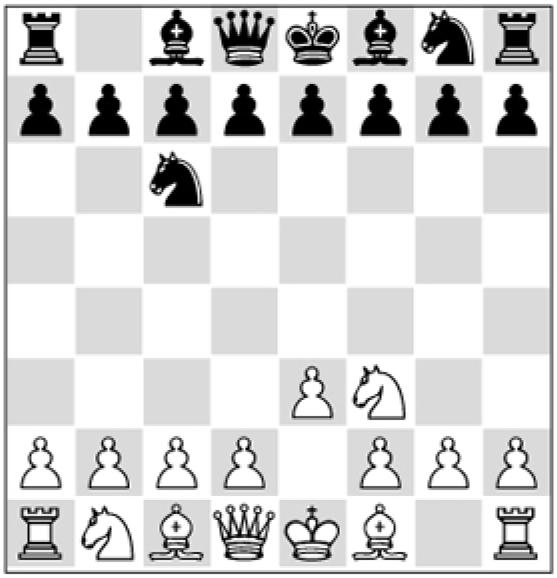
‘Development’ is a collective concept. We are not developed if one, two, or three pieces are deployed; rather, all the pieces must be deployed. The period of development, if I may put it this way, should be filled with a democratic spirit. How undemocratic it would be, for example, to let one of one’s pieces go for an extended walking tour while the others sit at home bored to death. No, let each piece make only one move and make way for the others.

2. A pawn move must not in and of itself be regarded as a developing move but should be seen simply as an aid to development

This is an important postulate for the beginner. If it were possible to develop the pieces without the help of pawn moves, the pawnless advance would be the correct one! For, as we have said, the pawn is not an aggressive fighting unit in the sense that its crossing of the frontier line is to be feared by the opponent, since obviously the attacking power of the pawn is slight in comparison with that of the pieces. But a pawnless advance cannot in fact be carried out, since the hostile pawn center, by virtue of its inherent lust to expand, would drive back the pieces we had developed. For this reason we should first build up a pawn center to safeguard our piece development. By ‘*center*’ we understand the little quadrant grouped around the midpoint of the board, therefore the squares e4, d4, e5, and d5 (see the delineated quadrant in Diagram 2).

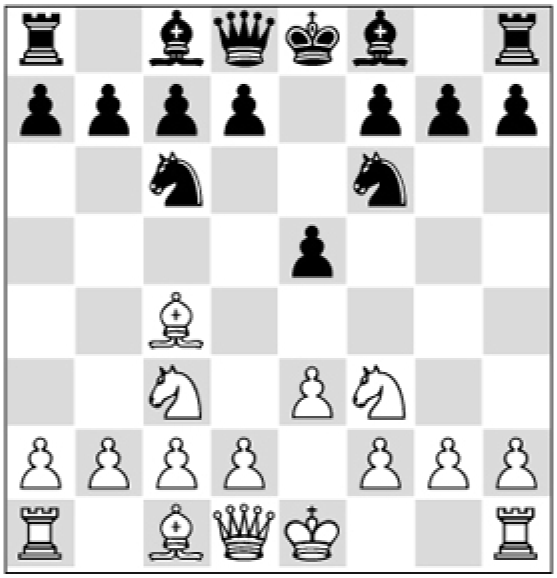
The breakdown of a pawnless advance is illustrated by the following: **1.♘f3 ♘c6 2.e3** (Diagram 3):

3



The e-pawn is not in the center. White’s advance is therefore to be characterized as pawnless in our sense. **2…e5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗c4?** (Diagram 4):

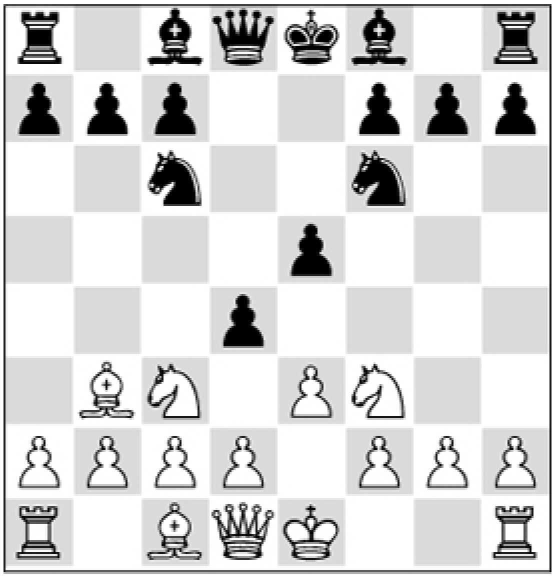
4



Black throws back the white pieces

4…d5. Now the faultiness of White’s advance is manifest: the black pawn mass has a *demobilizing* effect. **5.♗b3**. Already bad, as a piece has moved twice. **5…d4**

5



White is uncomfortably placed

and White is uncomfortably placed (at least from the standpoint of the player with less battle experience).

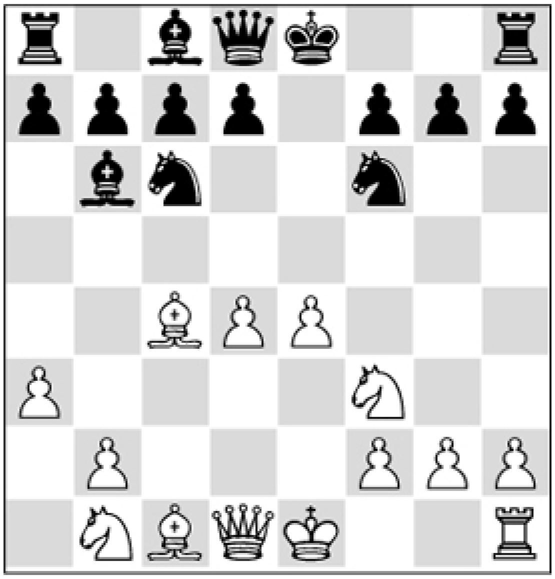
A further example is the following game, which is also presented in the ‘Blockade’ chapter. I will give it in short here:

Aron Nimzowitsch-Amateur

(Remove White’s a1-rook, and place the white a-pawn at a3.)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b6

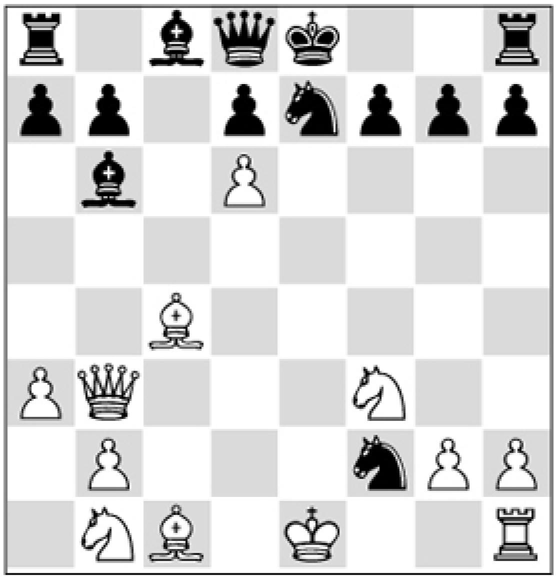
6



Black has lost the center

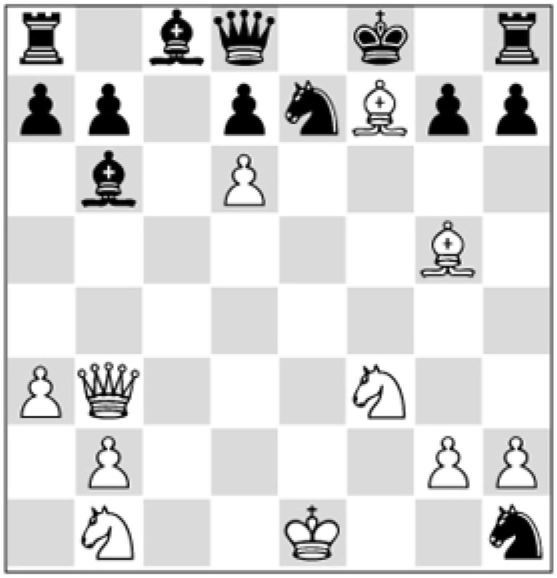
Black has now lost the center, and moreover, by omitting 4…d6, has granted White far too much mobility. His development may therefore be rightly be spoken of as pawnless, or, more precisely, as one that has become pawnless. **7.d5 ♘e7 8.e5 ♘e4 9.d6 cxd6 10.exd6 ♘xf2 11.♕b3**

7



Completely wedged in by the pawn at d6, Black succumbs to his opponent’s assault in a few moves. **11…♘xh1 12.♗xf7+ ♔f8 13.♗g5**

8



and Black resigns.

It follows from the rule given in section 2 that pawn moves in the development phase of the game are to be permitted only when they either help occupy the center or stand in logical connection with the occupation of the center – that is to say, a pawn move that protects its own center or attacks the enemy center. For example, in the open game after 1.e4 e5, either d2-d3 or d2-d4 – now or later – is always a correct move.

If, then, only the pawn moves mentioned above are allowable, this means that any moves by the flank pawns would have to be regarded as a loss of time, and such is indeed the case. (In closed games this rule applies only to a limited extent, since contact with the enemy is minimal and development proceeds at a slower pace.)

Summing up:

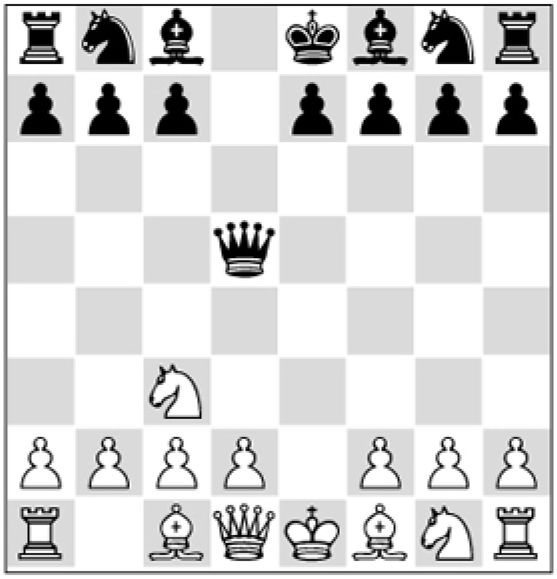
In the open game, rapidity of development is the supreme principle.

Every piece should be developed in one move. Every pawn move is to be considered a loss of time – except when it helps form or protect the center, or when it attacks the enemy center. Hence, as Lasker has correctly remarked: one or two pawn moves in the opening, not more.

3. The lead in development as the ideal to be sought

If I were running a race with someone, it would be at the very least inopportune for me to throw away valuable time by blowing my nose (although of course I should not in any way care to criticize such an action in itself). But if I could cause my opponent to waste time by a similar, time-wasting operation, I would then get an advantage in development. Moving the same piece repeatedly back and forth would be just such a loss of time. Hence, when we develop a piece and at the same time put one of our opponent's pieces under attack, we force him to waste time with a piece he has already moved. See Diagram 9. This very typical position arises after **1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♛xd5 3.♘c3**.

9

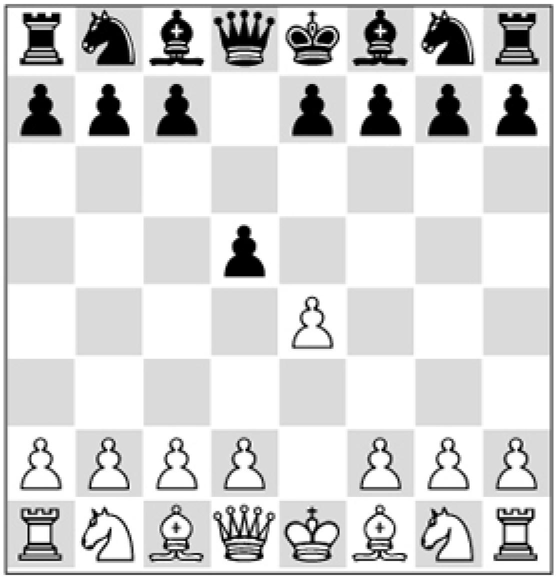


A typical win of tempo

4. Exchanging with resulting gain of tempo

The little game just given contains in a very compact form a maneuver that we may designate as compound (see Diagram 10).

10

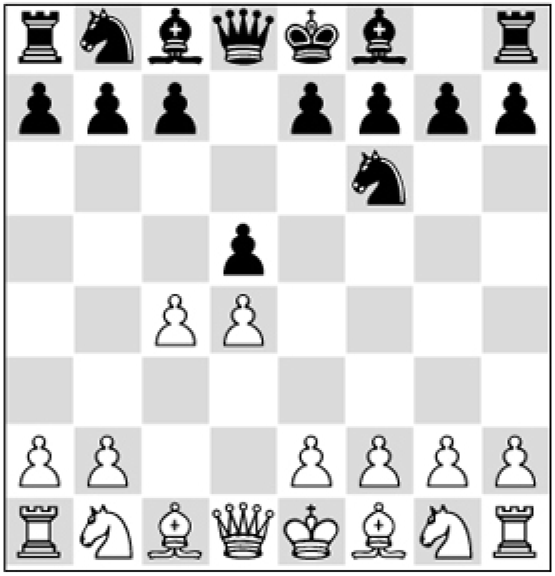


White to move. He exchanges, looking to lure the recapturing piece onto a square that is compromised

That is to say, why do we play 2.exd5? The answer is, to lure the piece that is to recapture onto a square where its position is compromised. This was the first part of the maneuver. The second part (3.♘c3) consisted in exploiting this queen position, which is in a certain sense compromised.

The compound maneuver just outlined is of the greatest value to the student, and in what follows we offer a few more examples. **1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘f6** (Diagram 11)

11

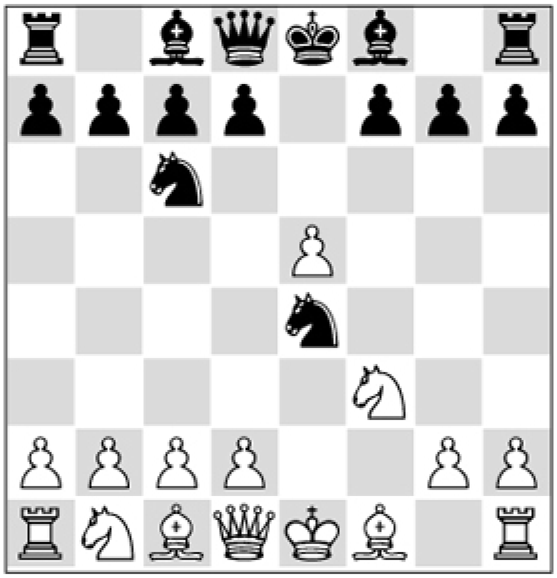


3.cxd5! And now there are two variations: if 3…♕xd5, then 4.♘c3; and if 3…♘xd5, then 4.e4. In both cases White, on his fourth move, makes a developing move of full value which Black is forced to answer by ‘wandering about.’

Incidentally, the beginner may ask in his heart, ‘Why should Black recapture?’ Many a skilful businessman reveals in his chess play an unworldly and refined cast of mind: he does not recapture! But the master knows to his regret that he is under a compulsion he cannot dispense with, else the material balance in the center would be disturbed. It follows from the fact of the compulsion that the capture keeps the opponent’s development at bay – for the moment, at least – except in the case where the recapture can be made with what is at the same time a developing move.

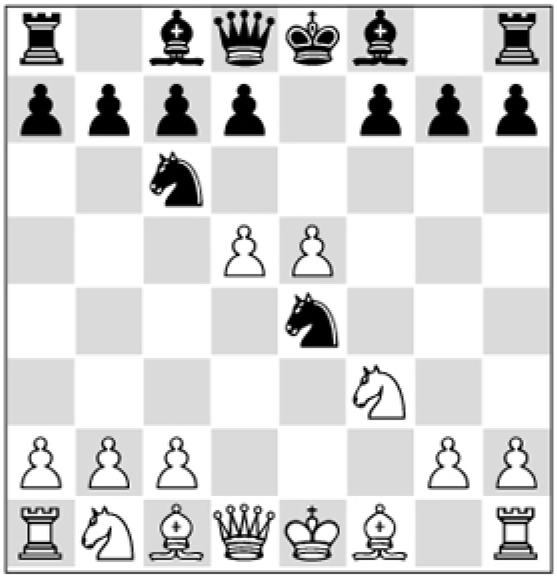
A further example: **1.e4 e5 2.f4 ♘f6 3.fxe5 ♘xe4** This last move is forced, otherwise Black would be down a pawn and with no compensation for it. **4.♘f3!** To prevent 4…♕h4+. **4…♘c6** (Diagram 12):

12



5.d3 The logical complement of the 3.fxe5 exchange. **5…♞c5 6.d4 ♞e4 7.d5** (Diagram 13)

13

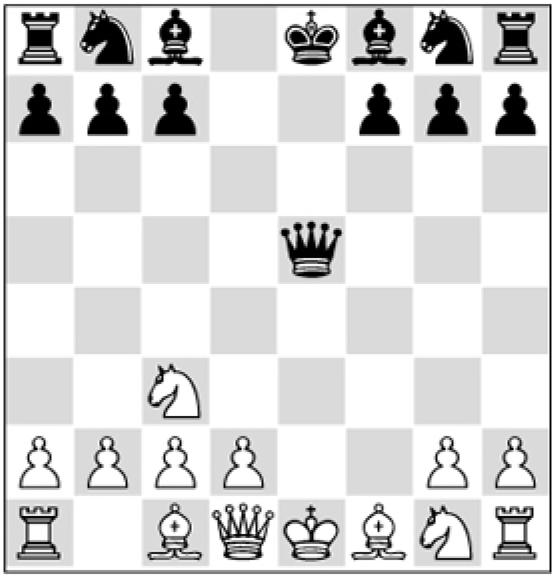


Now, after **7…♞b8**, White has the opportunity, with 8.♗d3 or 8.♘bd2, to win additional tempi. The latter eventuality must be taken to heart: the exchange of the time-devouring knight at e4 for the new-born knight at d2 amounts to a tempo loss for Black, for with the vanishing of the e4-knight there will ‘vanish’ also the tempi swallowed by it; that is, there will be nothing on the board to show for them. (When a farmer loses a piglet through illness he feels sorrow not only for the piglet but also for the excellent fodder he has lost in feeding it, the bran, etc.)

The intermezzo possible in the maneuver: exchanging with gain of tempo

After **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.♘c3! ♕e6** White could consider the exchange maneuver **5.fxe5 ♕xe5+** (Diagram 14):

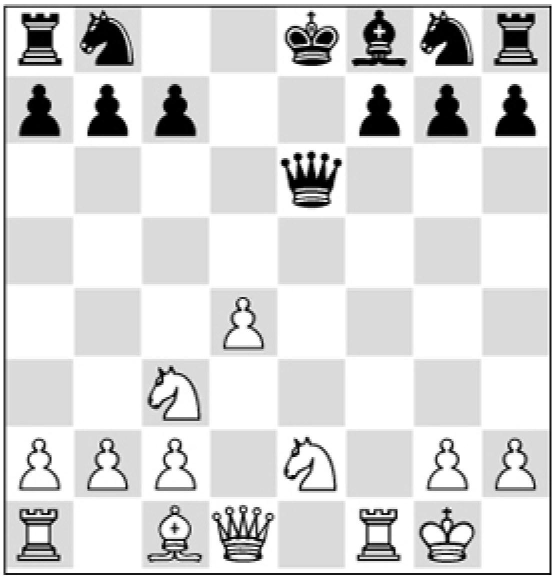
14



The placement of the queen at e5 is to be understood as compromised

since the e5-square must be seen as a compromised position for the black queen. Yet after **5.fxe5** there follows **5…♕xe5+**, when White is apparently in no position to exploit the placement of the queen. In reality, however, the check can be regarded only as an intermezzo. White simply plays **6.♗e2** (6.♕e2, by the way, is stronger still) and after all wins tempi at the expense of the queen with ♘f3 or d2-d4; e.g., **6.♗e2 ♗g4 7.d4** (not 7.♘f3 because of 7…♗xf3, without loss of time for Black, since the queen does not need to move) **7…♗xe2! 8.♘gxe2 ♕e6 9.0-0** (Diagram 15):

15



White’s lead in development is worth at least five tempi

when White has five tempi – both knights and the rook are developed, the pawn has possession of the center, and his king is safe, which is also a tempo – whereas Black shows only one visible tempo, the queen at e6. But later on this tempo will also be lost, two-fold and perhaps even three-fold, as the queen will have to pick up and remove herself (she will be chased away by ♘f4). Hence White’s lead in development is worth at least five tempi.

In order to make clear the nature of the intermezzo as such, I will tell you that among Russian peasants, between the engagement and the marriage, intermezzo is the order of the day – in the form of five to six illegitimate children. But these little folks constitute no more than an intermezzo that has no bearing whatever on the conception of the common bond of engagement and marriage. In the case before us, we see the same thing: exchange, intermezzo, win of tempo. Exchange and win of tempo are related, the intermezzo affects nothing.

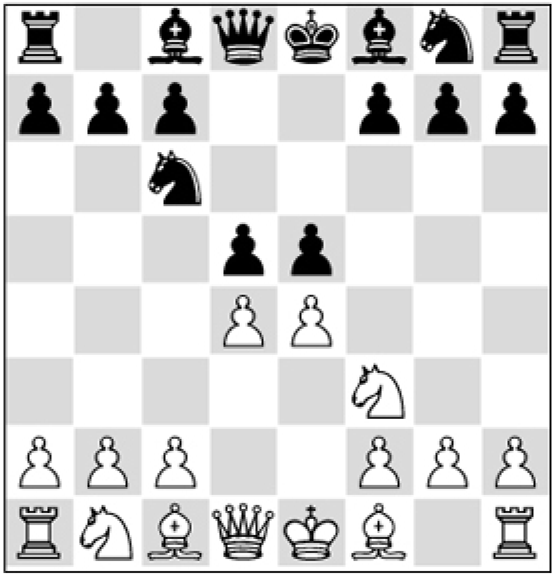
5. Liquidation, with subsequent development or a subsequent liberation

When a merchant sees that his business is not prospering, he does well to liquidate it so that he can invest the proceeds in a better venture. Unfortunately, however, another tactic is sometimes used: the merchant borrows in one place in order to pay in another, a scheme he repeats over and over until at last he borrows in one place and … fails to pay in the other – and that is not exactly pleasant, right?

Translated into chess terms, I mean by this that when one's development is threatened with being impeded, one must without fail reach for a radical cure and on no account try to remedy the situation with palliative measures. I shall make this clear in the first place with an example:

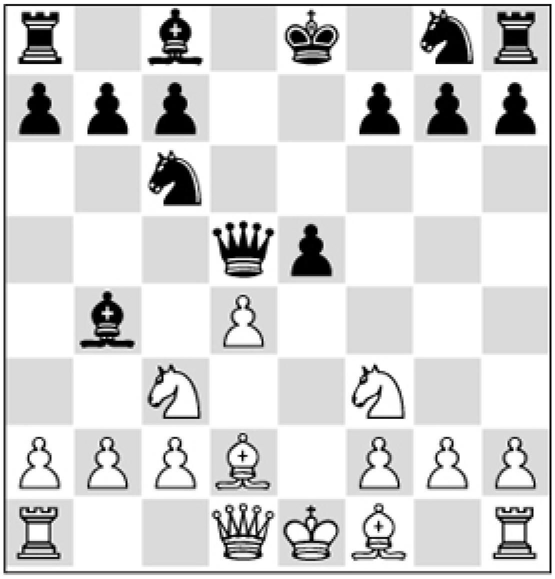
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞c6 3.d4 d5 (Diagram 16)

16



Black's last move is questionable, for the second player should not seek at once to imitate so adventurous a move as 3.d4. **4.exd5 ♛xd5 5.♘c3 ♝b4**. For the moment Black has barely held his ground, the queen did not have to move away; but after **6.♗d2** (Diagram 17):

17

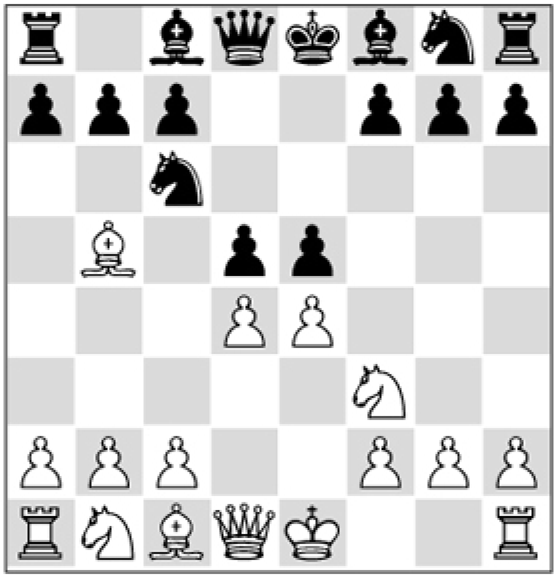


Black liquidates. How?

Black would seem to be in a quandary, for the retreat of the queen, which is again under threat, would cost a tempo. Correct, instead, is **6…♗xc3 7.♗xc3** (energetic liquidation) and now, in the same style, **7…exd4** (certainly not a protective move, such as, say, 7…♗g4, or a flight move, such as 7…e4, for in the development phase there is no time for this!) **8.♘xd4** followed by further development with **8…♘f6**, when Black has relieved the tension in the center and is in no way behind in development. (This relief of tension in the center, in the trading-off process as such, is a characteristic feature of complete liquidation.)

After **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 d5?** White can also embarrass his opponent with **4.♗b5!** (Diagram 18):

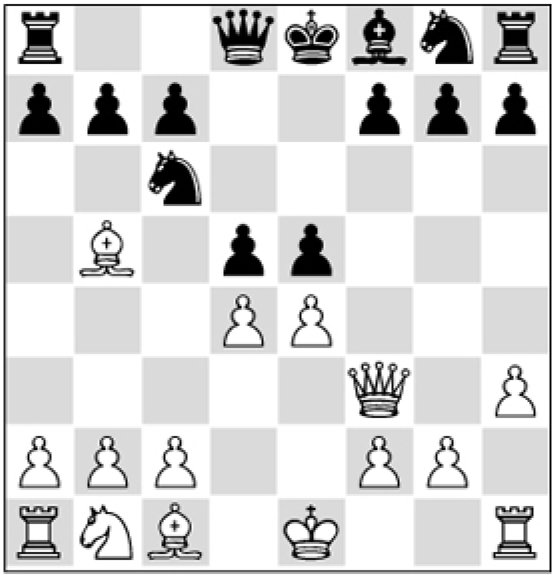
18



Black to move. He should ‘liquidate,’ namely, the central tension, so that he can develop further

Undeveloped as he is, Black finds himself threatened with 5.♘xe5. The protective move 4…♗d7 would be as inadequate as 4…♗g4. Both moves are flawed in that they ignore the liquidation in the center. 4…♗d7 loses a valuable pawn after 5.exd5 ♘xd4 6.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.♕xd4, and 4…♗g4 could be answered by 5.h3 (here a forcing move). For example, 4…♗g4 5.h3! ♗xf3 (best; if 5…♗h4?, then 6.g4 and 7.♘xe5) 6.♕xf3 (Diagram 19):

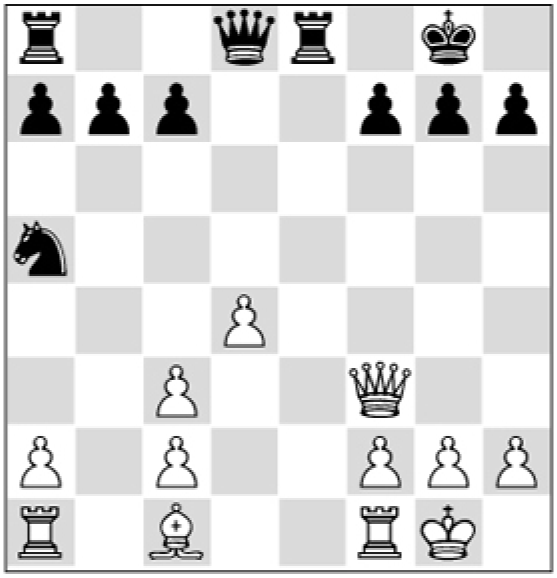
19



From this point on the queen exerts a decisive effect on the center: 6…♘f6 7.exd5 e4 (otherwise a pawn is lost) 8.♕e3! ♕xd5 9.c4, with a significant advantage for White.

Relatively best for Black (from Diagram 18) would be immediate liquidation with **4…dxe4**, since the means at his disposal do not permit him the luxury of a suspended situation in the center. There could follow **5.♘xe5 ♗d7**, when Black is threatening to win a piece with 6…♘xe5. After **6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♘c3 f5**, Black does not stand badly at all and has a satisfactory development. Or **6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.♘c3 ♗b4 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3** and now perhaps **9…♘e7**. After **10.♕g4 0-0 11.♘xc6 ♘xc6 12.♕xe4** it is true that White has an extra pawn, but Black is in possession of the e-file after **12…♖e8**. Then after **13.♕f3 ♘a5!** (Diagram 20) – Black's process of development is complete and now the maneuvering begins – followed perhaps by …c7-c6 and occupation of the weak light squares at c4 and d5 with …♘c4 and …♕xd5, Black is rather better. Hence, timely liquidation has brought the second player's questionable process of development back onto the right track.

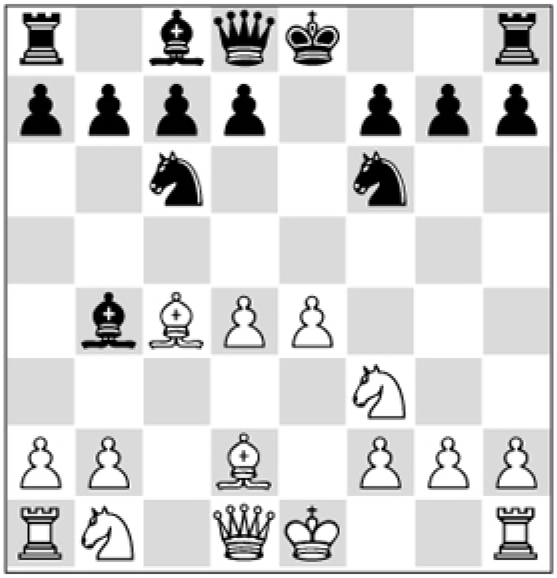
20



After 13…♘a5! Black plans the occupation of the weak squares at c4 and d5 with …c7-c6, …♘c4, and …♕d5

Another example is provided by the well-known Italian Variation **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4** (a forced surrender of the center) **6.cxd4 ♝b4+ 7.♝d2** (Diagram 21)

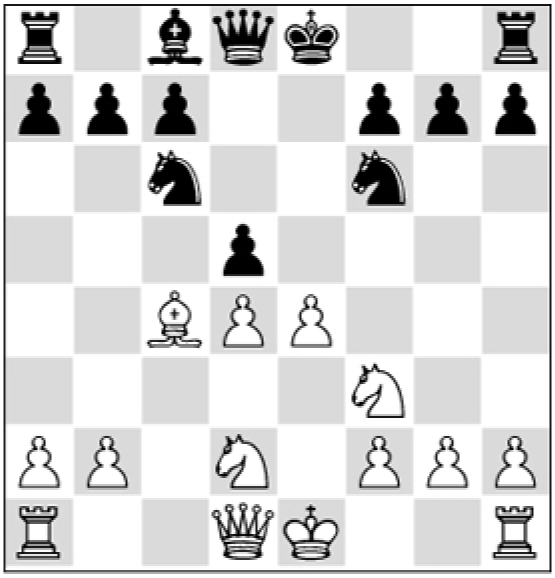
21



Now the bishop on b4 is under the minor threat of 8.♗xf7+ followed by 9.♕b3+.

On the other hand, White's center pawns are very strong and it is absolutely essential to break them up with …d7-d5. But if at once 7…d5 8.exd5 ♘xd5, then 9.♗xb4 ♘cxb4 (or 9…♘dxb4) 10.♕b3, when White stands somewhat better. The correct move, however, is **7…♝xd2+** (liquidating the threat on b4) **8.♞bxd2**, and now the freeing move **8…d5** (Diagram 22):

22



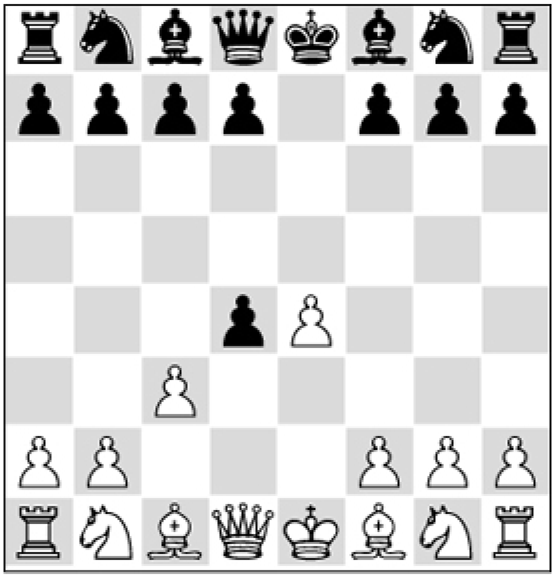
After **9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♕b3** Black secures for himself an approximately level game by means of the strategic retreat **10…♘ce7**.

As we have seen, the exchange, soundly applied, provides us with an excellent weapon and forms the basis of the typical maneuvers we analyzed above: (1) exchanging with a consequent gain of tempo, and (2) liquidation followed by a developing or freeing move.

We must, however, emphatically warn against exchanging blindly, since moving a piece several times only to exchange it for an enemy piece that has not moved would be just the typical beginner's mistake. So exchange pieces only in either of the two situations outlined above.

An example of a bad, unmotivated exchange: **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3** (Diagram 23):

23

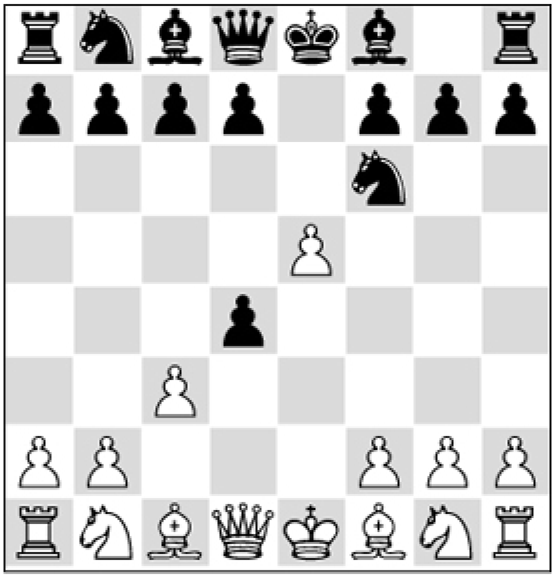


White plays a gambit. **3…♗c5?** It is curious that this move, which swallows up a tempo, is the first or second thought in the mind of every beginner. First he considers 3…dxc3 but rejects this move (he may perhaps have heard somewhere that 'one must not play to win a pawn in the opening') in favor of 3…♗c5!. The sad consequence for Black then is of course **4.cxd4 ♗b4+** (moving the bishop again!) **5.♗d2 ♗xd2+** (regrettably forced) **6.♘xd2**, with a three-tempi head start. The error lay in 3…♗c5, though after 4.cxd4, 4…♗b6 would have been better than 4…♗b4+, which leads to an unfavorable exchange.

6. The center and the furious rage to demobilize it. Exercise examples: when and how the advance of the enemy center is to be met. On the maintenance and the surrender of the center.

As already explained, an unrestricted mobile pawn center is a formidable attacking weapon, inasmuch as the inherent threat of the pawns to advance drives back the enemy pieces. In all these cases it is a matter of whether the knight that is being chased away, losing all its footing, will end up swimming around aimlessly or will succeed in holding its ground and not wasting the tempi associated with it.
Example: **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4** The white e-pawn is ready to march and is only waiting for a knight to appear on f6 so that it can immediately put this piece to flight. **3.c3 ♞f6!** Black takes his chances and lets happen what will happen – and this is what every beginner should do if he is to gain experience of the consequences of an advance in the center. **4.e5** (Diagram 24)

24

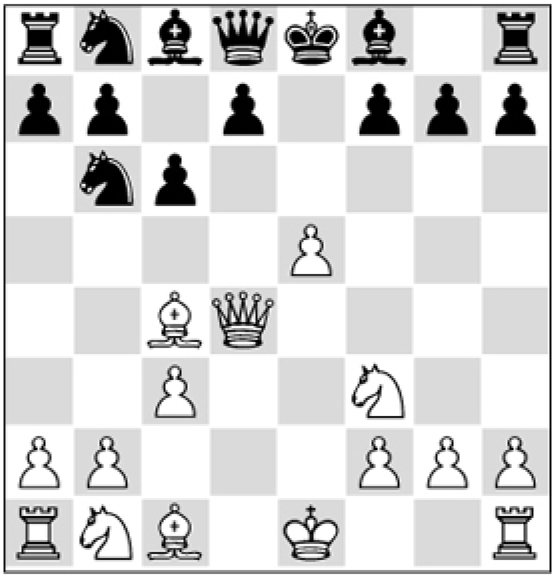


Black to move. Can he keep his tempi? Where does the knight go?

4…♞e4! Here the knight can maintain itself, for 5.♗d3 would be answered by a developing move of full value, namely 5…d5, and not by further wandering with 5…♘c5?, which after 6.cxd4 ♘xd3+ 7.♕xd3 would yield White an advantage of four tempi.

On the other hand, after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♘f6! 4.e5 it would be inopportune to move the knight to d5, for then this poor, harassed laddie would not find repose anytime soon; e.g., 4…♘d5 5.♕xd4 (not 5.♗c4 because of 5…♘b6, when the bishop in turn has to lose a tempo) 6…c6 6.♗c4 ♘b6 7.♘f3 (Diagram 25):

25

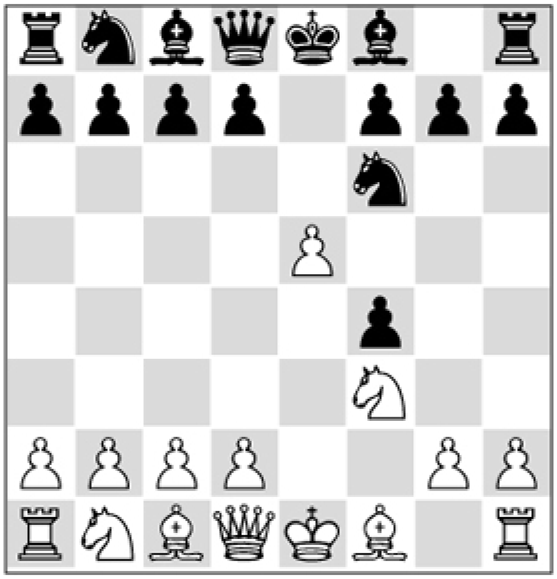


White has six tempi vs. two, for the knight on b6 does not stand better than at f6

White now has 6 tempi against Black’s 2 or 1½, for the knight is not better placed at b6 than it would be at f6, and …c7-c6 is not even a full tempo, inasmuch as this is not a move of a central pawn.

Example: **1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4** (a loss of time) **3.♞f3 ♞f6! 4.e5** (Diagram 26) when we are faced with the same decision as before.

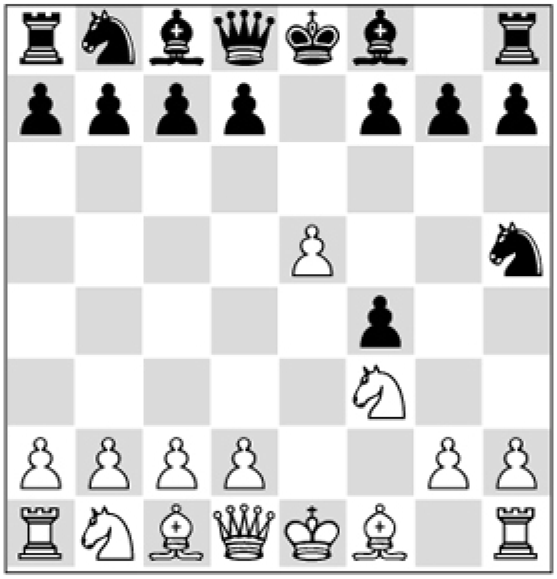
26



Where does the knight go?

Here, **4…♘e4** would not signify ‘maintenance’; on the contrary, the immediate **5.d3 ♘c5? 6.d4**, etc., would follow. But here h5 is, by exception, a harmonious place for the knight (in most other cases a knight on the edge of the board is unfavorably placed); e.g., **4.e5 ♘h5** (Diagram 27)

27



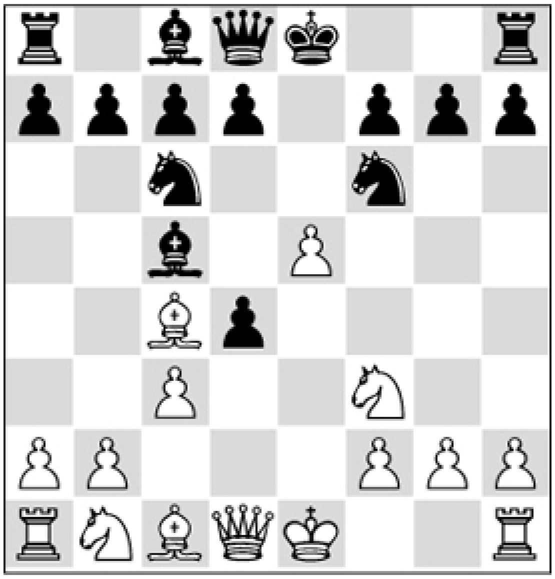
By exception, h5 is a happy place for the knight

5.d4 d5, or 5…d6, in order to exchange the white king’s pawn (which has moved twice) for the queen’s pawn (which has moved only once), when Black does not stand badly.

In general, the knight seeks to maintain itself in the center, as in the first example (Diagram 24), and only by exception on the edge of the board (Diagram 27).

Example: After **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝c4 ♝c5 4.c3** (a disconcerting move that plans an aggression against Black’s center so as to disturb his deployment) **4…♞f6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5** (Diagram 28):

28

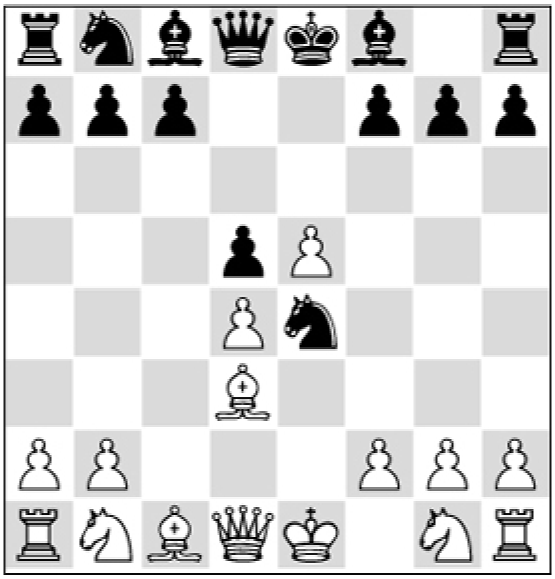


Which is correct, 6…♘e4 or 6…d5?

6…♘e4 would be a mistake because of 7.♗d5. After **6.e5** the knight cannot hold its position by its own strength alone and enlists the help of the d-pawn; hence **6…d5**, and if, say **7.♝b3**, then **7…♞e4**, maintaining itself there.

Example of establishing a maintained position: In the position we have already examined after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♘f6! 4.e5 ♘e4! 5.♗d3 d5!, White plays 6.cxd4 (Diagram 29):

29



A tempo-robbing assault against the e4-knight is in the air

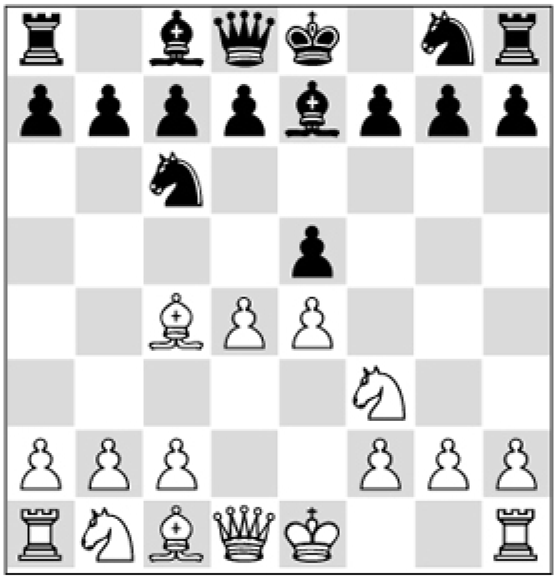
Black cannot allow himself to believe that his position is secure, for a tempo-robbing attack on the e4-knight is in the air (♘c3). But Black develops with attacking intent with, for instance, 6…♘c6 7.♘f3 ♗g4 (with a threat against d4) or by 6…c5. But not the illogical 6…♗b4+?; e.g., 7.♗d2 and Black will have to accede to a tempo-swallowing exchange.

It is more prudent, anyway, to keep the center intact. Even if we should succeed in bearing the brunt of the advancing pawn mass (the pawn roller) by an appropriate withdrawal of the knight, as outlined above, this way of playing is still fraught with difficulty. Moreover, the pawn roller need not advance right away but may hold the eternal threat of doing so over our heads. Hence:

If it can be done without incurring other disadvantages, keep the center intact!

After **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗e7** (completely playable, but 3…♗c5 is more aggressive) **4.d4** (Diagram 30):

30



Black to move. Which is correct on principle, …exd4 or …d7-d6? How is ….♗f6 refuted? Why is …f7-f6 not a possibility?

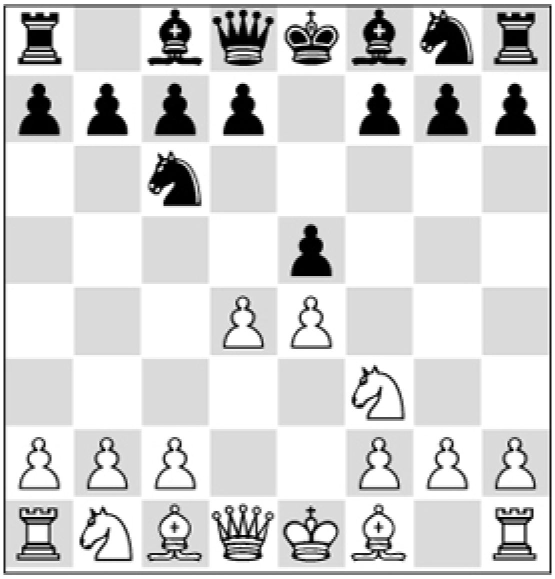
Black does best to protect his center (keep it intact) with **4…d6**; after **5.dxe5 dxe5** White’s center is immobile. What is meant by protecting the center is guarding it with a pawn (but, of course, not 4…f6, which would be a dreadful mistake, as the diagonal c4-g8 would have a decisive effect), since the pawn is after all a born defender. If a piece has to protect some other attacked piece it feels itself hampered in its range of action, whereas in similar circumstances the pawn would feel quite content.

Besides, in the case before us, protecting the center with a piece, which is to say, with 4…♗f6?, protects only the e5-pawn and not the center considered in the abstract. For instance, 4…♗f6? 5.dxe5 ♘xe5 6.♘xe5 ♗xe5. The exchange has occurred in accordance with our rule: Exchange resulting in a gain of tempo. Now 7.f4, the gain of tempo.

6a. Surrender of the center

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 (Diagram 31)

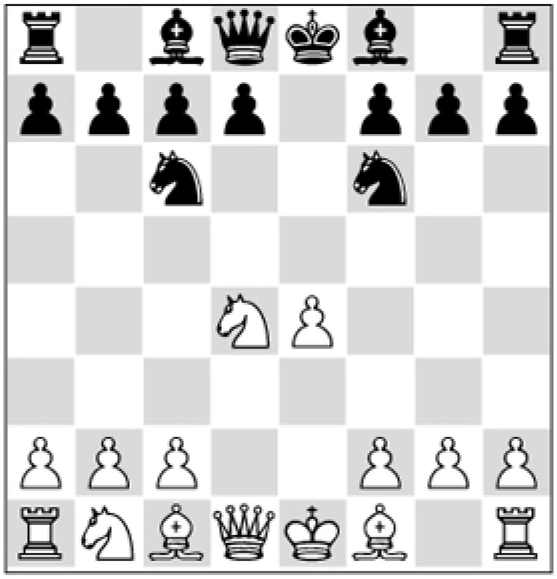
31



Black to move. Should the center be held or surrendered?

3…exd4! 3…d6 would be uncomfortable for Black; e.g., 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 – otherwise the e-pawn falls – and Black has lost the right to castle and with it a convenient way to connect the rooks. **4.♘xd4** In the position now arrived at, Black, after careful consideration, can play **4…♘f6** (Diagram 32):

32



since after **5.♘xc6 bxc6** the possible attempt to demobilize the knight with 6.e5 could be parried by (among other moves) 6…♘e4 (7.♗d3 d5). But with this move Black would have solved only a part of the problem, that is, the lesser problem of how to develop the knight at g8, but not the problem of the center as such.

For the solution to this latter task the following postulates are essential:

(1) **If one has permitted the enemy to establish an unrestricted, mobile center pawn, this pawn must be looked upon as a dangerous criminal – against this all our chess fury is to be directed.**

Hence the second postulate:

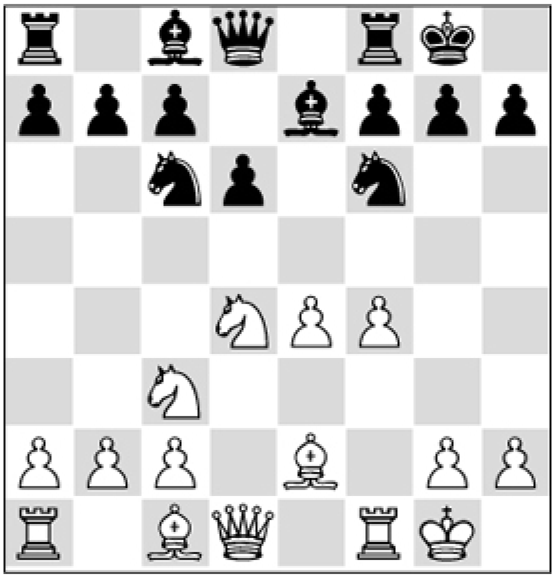
(2) **The pawn is either to be destroyed (…d7-d5 followed by …dxe4 should be prepared) or placed under restraint.**

So we condemn the criminal to death or imprisonment for life. Or we can combine the two very nicely – fifteen years of imprisonment and the death penalty, as the saying goes – say, by first condemning him to death, then commuting his sentence to life imprisonment. Or, the more usual case: we keep the e4-pawn restrained long enough so that it is completely enfeebled (made backward), then show our ‘manly courage’ and administer the death penalty (…d6-d5 followed by …dxe4).

Restraint would be initiated by 4…d6 and built up by …♘f6, …♗e7, …0-0, …♖e8, and …♗f8, by which the incriminated advance is kept under close observation. White, in contrast, would do everything possible to make the villain mobile, perhaps by means of an eventual f2-f4 and ♖e1, etc.

The game might proceed as follows: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 d6 5.♗e2 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.f4** (Diagram 33):

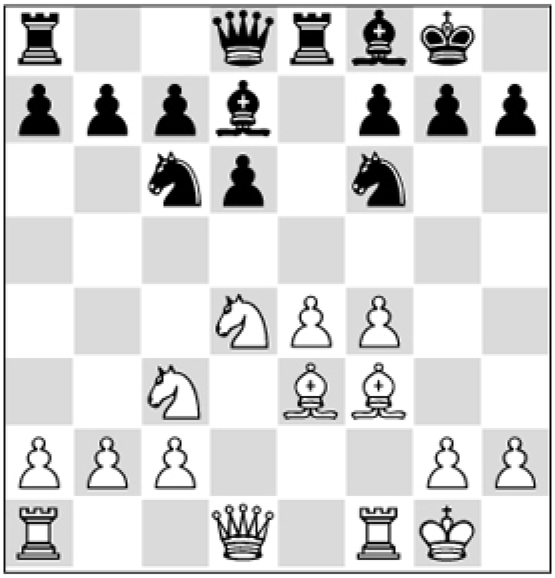
33



Black to move. Which is better, 8…d5 or 8…♖e8?

8…♖e8! Not 8…d5 because of 9.e5. **9.♗e3 ♗f8! 10.♗f3 ♗d7** (Diagram 34):

34



For and against e4

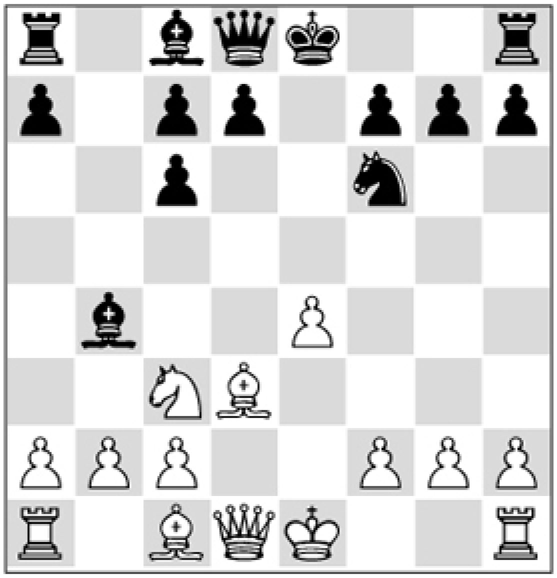
Each side has completed its deployment. White will try to push through e4-e5; Black will push back against this.

This starting position gives rise to most interesting struggles. To this purpose we should like to set this position as an example, recommending that the student practice playing it both for and against the center. This will strengthen his positional vision.

The restraining process is difficult to carry out; it would seem easier to kill off the mobile center pawn (even if only in those cases where such an action is feasible). But, as we have said, these instances do not occur often. A few examples follow.

Scotch Game: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗b4 6.♘xc6** To be able to make the protective move ♗d3. **6…bxc6! 7.♗d3** (Diagram 35):

35

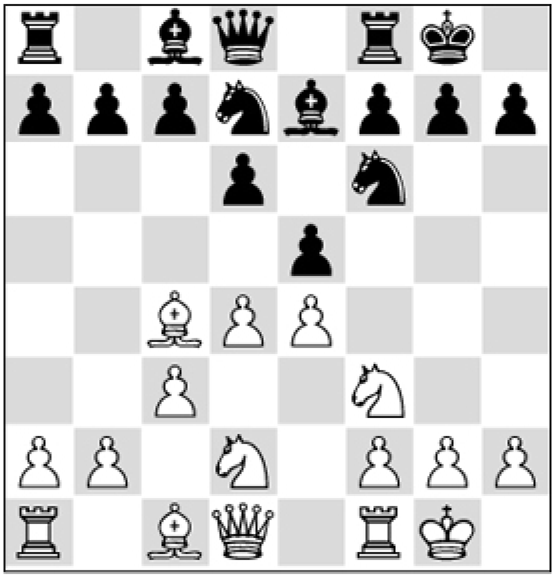


The second player no longer needs to besiege the e-pawn

Now the second player need no longer lay siege to the e-pawn with, say, …d7-d6 followed by …0-0 and …♖e8, since he has the immediate **7…d5** available. After the further moves **8.exd5 cxd5** White’s troublemaker at e4 has suddenly disappeared.

A similar fate overtook the center pawn in the game Lee-Nimzowitsch at Ostend (1907): **1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘bd2 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.c3 ♗e7 6.♗c4 0-0 7.0-0** (Diagram 36):

36



After 7…exd4 8.cxd4 Black destroys the enemy center pawn without a preliminary restraint or siege. How?

7…exd4 8.cxd4 d5!, after which the proud, unrestrained, and so mobile e4-pawn vanishes at a single blow – it is pulverized! After **9.♗d3** (on 9.exd5 there follows 9…♘b6, with …♘d5 next) **9…dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 ♘f6** (this is our exchange with resulting gain of tempo) **12.♗d3 ♘d5 13.a3 ♗f6** Black stands better due to the weakness at d4.

We could adduce many further examples, but for lack of space we shall content ourselves with three. For the third we give the opening phase of my game with Yates (White) at Baden-Baden 1925: **1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3** Or 3.e5 ♘d5 4.c4 ♘b6 5.d4 d6, when Black threatens to win back the tempi sacrificed; but 6.e6 fxe6, with attacking chances for White, may be playable. **3…d5 4.exd5 ♘xd5 5.d4**, by which White establishes an unrestricted center pawn. There followed 5…♗f5 6.a3 g6. The alternative to this would be the restraint of the d-pawn by 6…e6, with a later occupation of the d-file and keeping the d4-pawn under observation. **7.♗c4 ♘b6 8.♗a2 ♗e7 9.♗e3 e5!** So Black has played not for restraint but for the extinction of the d4-pawn. There followed **10.♕e2 0-0 11.dxe5 ♗g4**; I won the pawn back and had the freer game.

7. On pawn hunting in the opening. There is no time for this. The special esteem for the central pawn and how this manifests itself.

Since the mobilization of the forces represents by far the most important concern in the opening stages, anyone who knows this will find comic the eagerness with which a less-experienced player plunges into an utterly unimportant sideline. We are speaking here of pawn hunting. Such eagerness is better explained in psychological terms. The young player wants to bring his dormant energies to bear, which he achieves by taking the scalps of perfectly harmless pawns. The older player – well, the older player readily demonstrates how young he actually still is. In both cases the player meets with a misfortune.

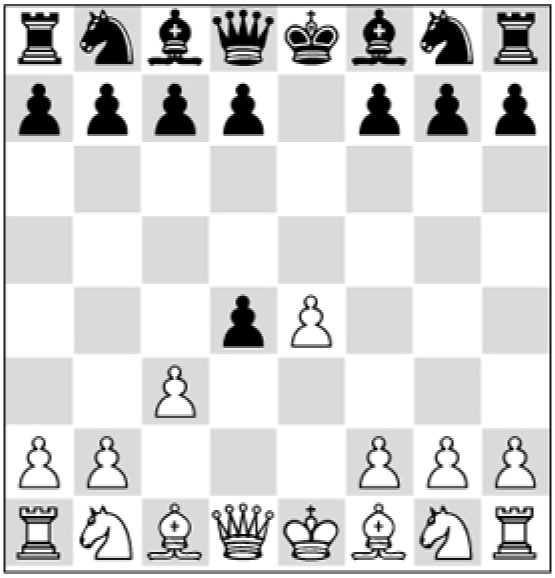
When we consider that a player's still-undeveloped game is comparable to a tender, child-like organism, we must realize too that the pawn-hunting amateurs are otherwise thoroughly logical and proper-thinking gentlemen; hence we marvel at their having a taste for winning pawns in this way. What would these men do if on a fine morning a boy about six years old appeared at the stock exchange and in all seriousness sought to buy shares in the market? They would burst out laughing. For when we, as grown-up and 'reasonable' men buy up shares of stock and similar documents, 'we know very well what we are doing' (perhaps we have too much money and wish to get rid of some of it, which we also know how to do). But what is the boy supposed to do with shares!!! With the same justification I ask, 'What is the point of the undeveloped game/organism winning a contemptible pawn? The young organism needs to grow, that is its most important concern. No one, not the mother nor father nor prime minister, can grow for the child; no one can assume his activity for him, no one can take his place. But doing business – this we, the grown-ups, can do!

The moral of the story: You should not play to win a pawn while your development remains incomplete! There is only one exception to this, which we shall discuss later.

First, however, let us demonstrate the best way of 'declining' a gambit. We can do this briefly, as we have already considered a few pertinent cases.

In the case of **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4! 3.c3!** (Diagram 37):

37

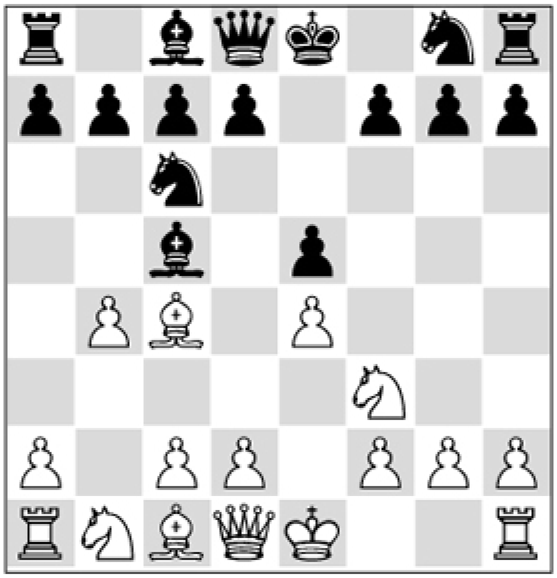


Black to move

Black can play 3…♘f6, which we especially recommend to the student, as well as any other developing move, with the exception naturally of 3…♗c5??. Also possible is 3…♘c6 4.cxd4 d5 or 3…d5, or finally even 3…c6 4.cxd4 d5 (now the c6-pawn is logically connected to the center). On 3…c6 4.♕xd4, Black likewise plays 4…d5 5.exd5 cxd5, with …♘c6 to follow.

In the Evans Gambit, **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝c4 ♝c5 4.b4** (Diagram 38):

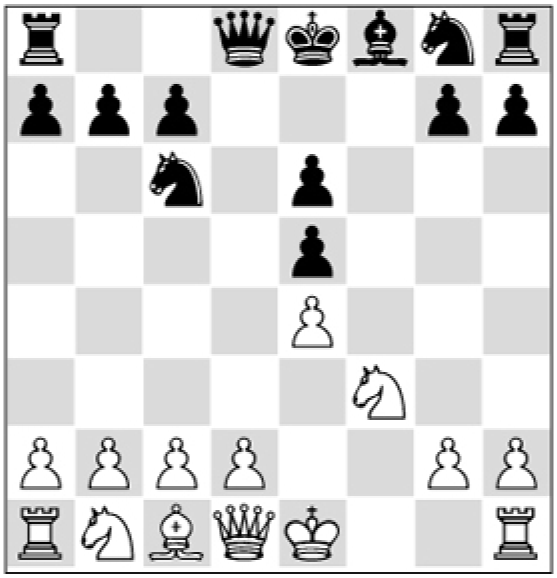
38



we decline the gambit with 4…♗b6 so that the bishop does not get pushed around with 5.c3. With 4…♗b6 Black has by no means lost a tempo, for White was able to play the move 4.b4 gratis without Black in the meantime being able to develop a piece; in that sense 4.b4 was unproductive in terms of development – unproductive as every pawn move not logically connected with the center must be by the nature of things. Let us compare (4…♗b6) 5.b5 (to make a virtue of necessity after the ill-motivated pawn advance, trying to exert a demobilizing effect on Black’s game) 5…♘d4!; if now 6.♘xe5, then 6…♕g5, with a strong attack.

We decline the King’s Gambit – 1.e4 e5 2.f4 – with 2…♗c5 or with the simple 2…d6, which is a better move than its reputation. For instance, 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.♗c4 ♗e6!; after 5.♗xe6 fxe6 6.fxe5 dxe5 (Diagram 39):

39



Black is slightly better despite the doubled pawn

Black has the open d- and f-files and good development, and stands better despite the doubled pawn. If after 4…♗e6 5.♗b5, then perhaps 5…♗d7, for since White has wandered about with his bishop, Black may do the same.

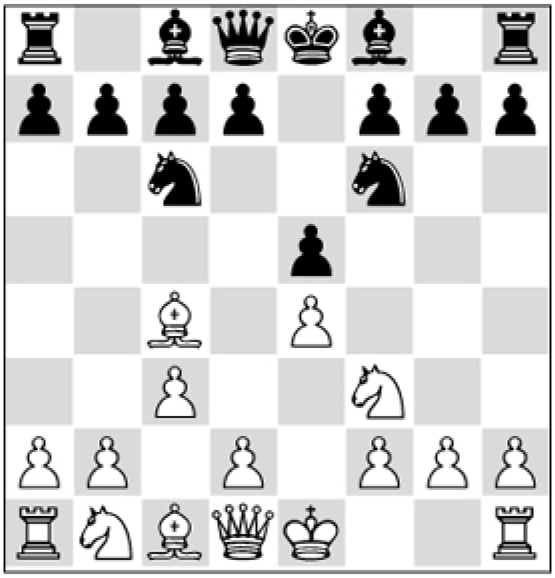
The student should notice particularly that after **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♗e2** the possibility of the transaction **5…exf4**, and if **6.d3**, then **6…d5** – therefore a timely surrender of the center and a speedy recapture of it.

Acceptance of the gambit – **1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 ♘f6!** – is also permissible – not, however, with the idea of keeping the gambit pawn, but rather to pose a hard test to the strength of the white center (4.e5 ♘h5) or to achieve the liberating counter-thrust 4…d5 (after 4.♘c3).

7a. Always capture a center pawn if this can be done without too great a danger.

Example: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.c3?** (Diagram 40):

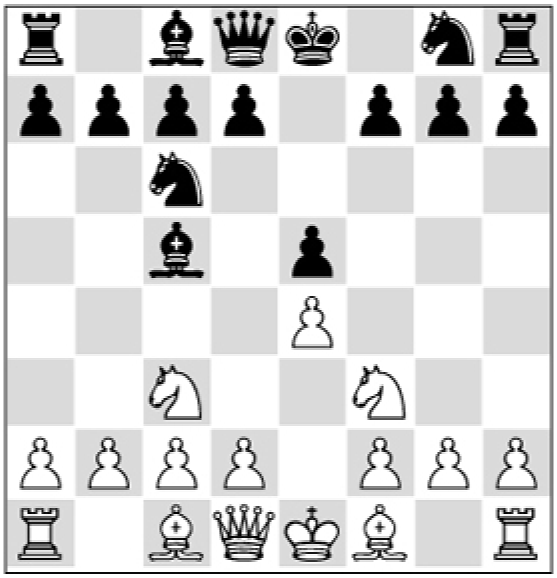
40



4…♞xe4! For the ideal gain that the conquest of the center signifies is worth more than the expenditure of a tempo. It is less important to keep the pawn; to keep to the ideal, and not the material gain is what we are concerned with here.

Expressed in everyday terms, the win of a pawn anywhere on the side of the board does not bring happiness to him who captures it. But if you win a pawn in the center you have accomplished something for your immortality, for by so doing you will get an opportunity to expand at the very spot where the battle in the opening phase of the game prefers to rage, namely in the center – in other words, ‘elbow-room,’ as the Americans say. In the instances outlined above, let your knights be like Americans! (See Diagram 41)

41



White plays 4.♘xe5 ♘xe5 5.d4, a transaction in the sense of Section 7a

With this example we conclude the first chapter and refer the reader to Games 1 and 2 (to be found at the end of Chapter 3).

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Chapter 2

Open Files

1. Introduction and general remarks

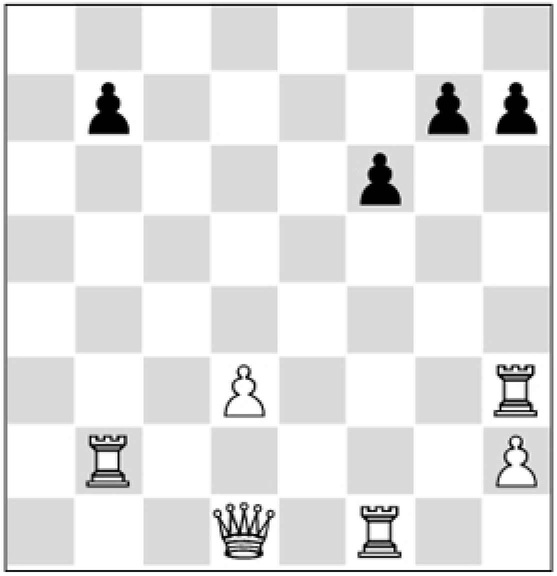
The theory of open files – my discovery – should be considered one of the fundamental pillars of my system. I had already published the principle concerning the establishment of outposts about twelve years ago [1913] in the *Wiener Schachzeitung*, but at that time I was not yet aware that this maneuver must logically be subordinate to the main purpose of any operation along a file, namely the eventual occupation of the 7th or 8th rank. That is to say, in order to break down the enemy resistance on a file we establish outposts along it, persistently aiming at the 7th rank, whose occupation must be regarded as the ideal to be achieved in such an operation. Establishing an outpost, therefore, is merely a support-maneuver.

In Scandinavia I would sometimes conclude my talks on the open file as follows: ‘Gentlemen, I hope these principles of open file play will be of help to you and will serve to open your eyes.’ This little jest, which of course was intended with some seriousness as well, never provoked any dissent. The ‘open file’ is my favorite among my intellectual children, and it has ever been a joy for me to be able to erect this conceptual edifice, built up with so much effort and creative agony, before members of an audience and for readers. But let us begin at the beginning.

Definition: **A file is open when one’s own pawn is missing on that file, or when it is not missing but hidden.**

as for instance in the case of the h-file in Diagram 42:

42

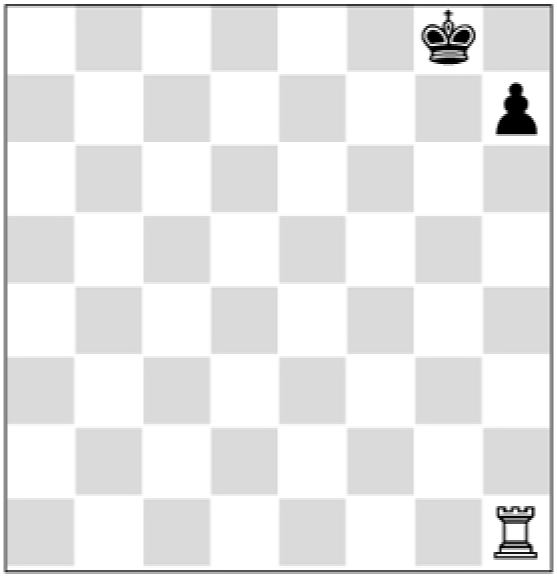


The white b-, f-, and h-files are open, the h-file emanating from h3. The d-file is closed

This definition is meant to convey the fact that in judging whether a file is open or closed it does not concern us whether that file aims at empty, friendly points or against living, enemy pieces (pawns, as a rule). There is after all no fundamental difference between play against a piece and play against a point.

Let us consider, for example, a white rook on h1, a black king on g8, and a black pawn on h7 (Diagram 43):

43



There is no difference between an h7-square to be conquered and a pawn at h7

And let us imagine, on the other hand, this same position but instead of a pawn at h7 only an empty square at the point that White would like to gain control of. In both cases, White, with the material at hand (it was taken for granted that I should give only the most important outlines of the position), seeks to achieve domination over h7 (a preponderance of attacking force as against the defenders of h7) and after due preparation he will finally play either ♖xh7 or ♖h7 (as the case may be), in the one instance establishing his proud conqueror on h7 in the place of the captured piece, and in the other case in the place of the conquered point.

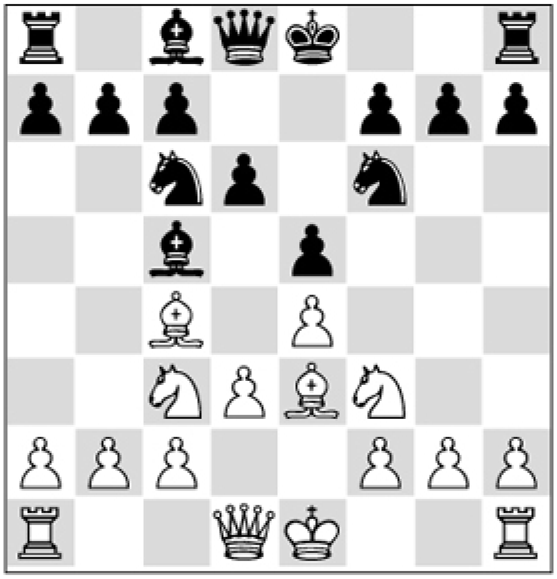
Hence, there is as always no difference between an h7-square to be conquered and an h7-pawn, for the mobility of this pawn was a quantity that tended to zero, for every object of attack must be made as close to immobile as possible.

2. The origin (genesis) of the open file. By peaceful means. By hostile advance. The object of attack.

From the definition of the open file it is apparent at once that a file becomes open through the disappearance of one of our own pawns. This disappearance will be brought about peacefully when our opponent feels induced to trade off our good (because it is posted in the center) piece, after which the recapture is made by a pawn (see Diagram 44).

We must emphasize here the little word center: Only seldom, and never in the opening, will you be able to induce your opponent to open a file by exchanging a piece that has been posted on the edge of the board. You will achieve your objective instead through a central posting, for a piece in the center, exerting its influence in all directions, will indeed get traded off.

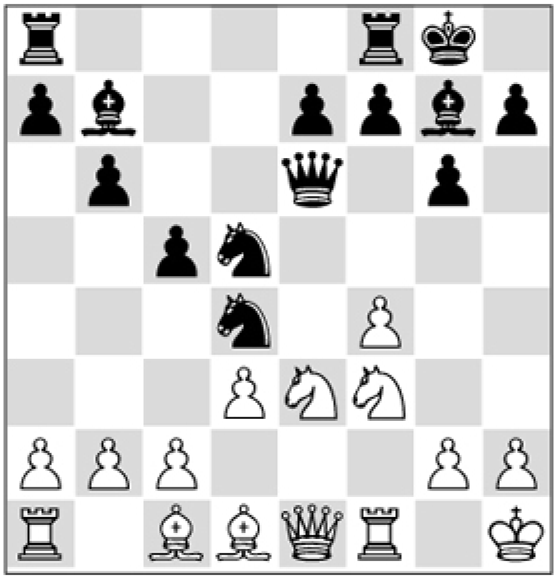
44



Black plays 6…♗xe3, opening the f-file for White

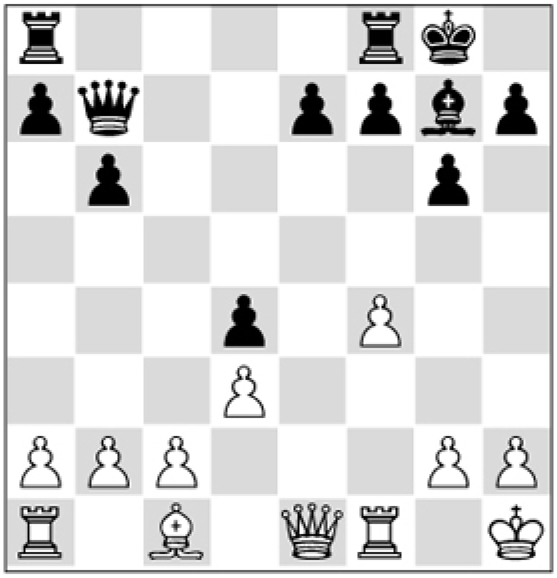
A position from the game Thomas-Alekhine (Baden-Baden 1925) provides a further example (Diagram 45):

45



Black has posted his knights in the center, and White feels compelled to exchange them: **14.♘xd4 cxd4** Opening the c-file. After the further moves **15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗f3 ♕d7 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7** (Diagram 46),

46



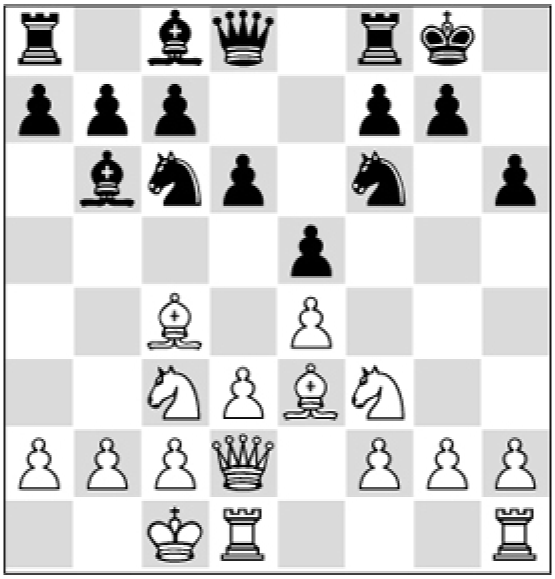
White feels compelled to play 18.c4, inasmuch as the pawn would not be tenable on c2

the importance of this file was already considerable. There followed **18.c4!**. On c2 this pawn could not have been held. **18…dxc3** Opening the d-file as well, since his own obstructing pawn at d4 (every one of one’s pawns is an obstruction) disappears. After **19.bxc3** Black played **19…♜ac8** and …♖fd8 with play on both files simultaneously.

So post your pieces centrally as long as you can do so safely (not provoking the advance of a pawn-roller)! In this way your opponent will quite often be provoked into an exchange that will give you an open file.

Let us consider the position in Diagram 44 with the continuation 6…♗e6 7.♕d2 0-0 8.0-0-0 h6? (Diagram 47):

47

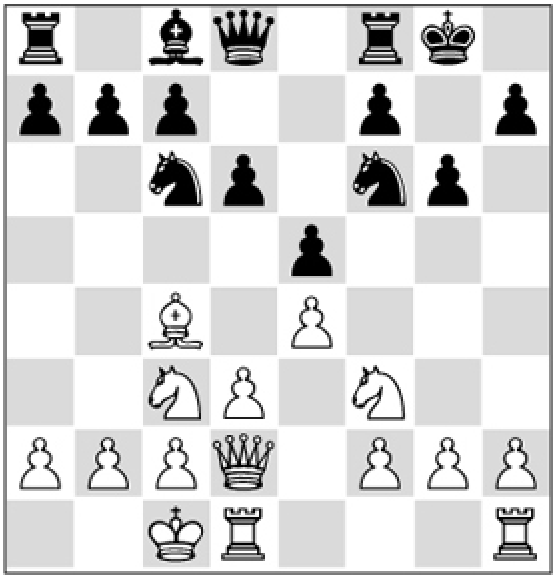


The point of attack in this position is h6

We have here a typical illustration of the effective opening of a file. Thanks to the pawn on h6 White can quickly bring about the disappearance of his own g-pawn, and for this reason …h7-h6 was a bad move (bad, but not to be criticized as a waste of time, for Black had already completed his development, and there is after all a difference between going to sleep after one’s work is done and during it!). The troop march against h6 – the object of attack, as Tarrasch calls it – consists of h2-h3, g2-g4, g4-g5; after …hxg5 White recaptures with a piece, when ♖g1 takes possession of the g-file that now lies open. It is true that one of his own pieces is now in the way, but this is of no importance, as the piece is elastic; it is only a pawn that is obstinate, and we have our hands full if we want to try to get it to change.

A second example: for the sake of practice let us consider in Diagram 48 that the bishops on e3 and b6 are not present, the h-pawn stands on h7 and the g-pawn on g6. Then g6 is the point of attack and it is the h-file that is to be opened (always the file next to the point of attack). The plan is h2-h4-h5xg6.

48



The point of attack in this position is g6

The beginner tends to overestimate the importance of the file. One such player proudly showed me an open file; there were neither queen nor rook on the board – both had already been sacrificed.

In this position, after h2-h4 we first have to deal with the knight on f6, perhaps with ♘d5; then h4-h5 can be played comfortably without having to sacrifice. As a last resort the attacked party may pass by the advancing pawn, say with …g6-g5 after h4-h5 – which, however, would not work here, as g5 is unsupported.

3. The ideal (ultimate purpose) of every operation along a file. On some concomitant phenomena. Raiding moves. Enveloping maneuvers.

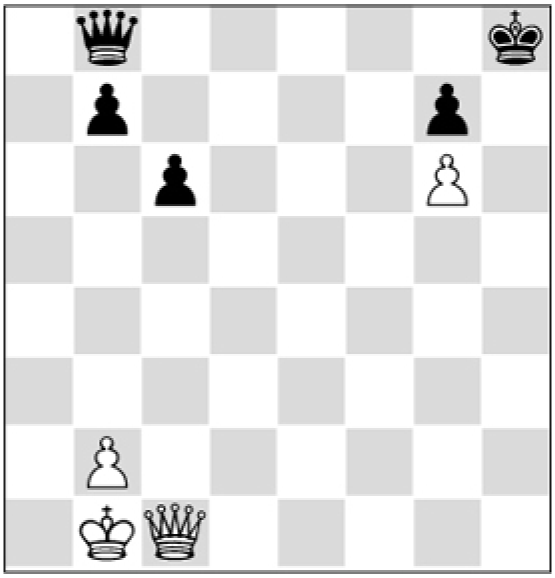
The ideal of every operation along a file lies in the ultimate penetration along the path of this line into the opponent's position, hence the 7th or 8th rank (from White's point of view).

This is a very important postulate, and one to be emphasized here: along the path of this line. For if we operate, on the d-file, say, and then reach the 7th rank by an indirect route, perhaps by ♖d1-d4-a4-a7, I can by no means accept this operation as a direct utilization of the d-file.

Now for a few elementary examples of file operations:

1. A line of operation down the h-file. (Diagram 49):

49

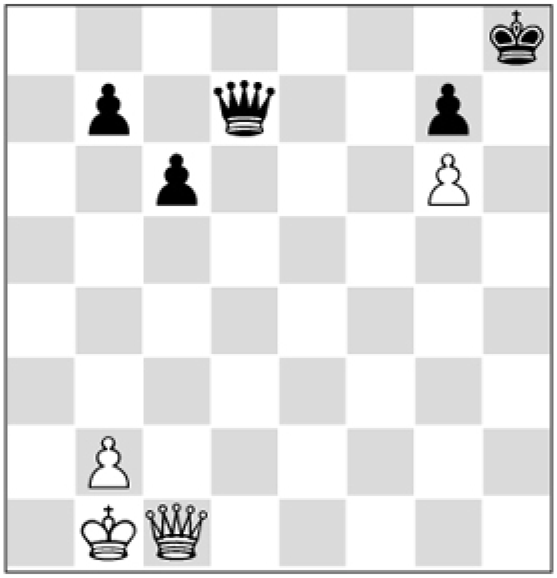


Catastrophe on the h-file (1)

White takes possession of this file by 1.♕h1+. If we think of the line from h1 to h8 as an arrow, this arrow would show the direction of force along the h-file. 1…♔g8. And now, as the rule states, 2.♕h8+ or 2.♕h7+. The first is inadmissible, therefore 2.♕h7+ ♔f8, and now 3.♕h8+ followed by the raiding 4.♕xb8 (we call every fork-like, simultaneous attack on two pieces a raiding move). The raiding move in this case does not occur by chance but rather is a not uncharacteristic concomitant phenomenon of the forceful entry into the 7th or 8th rank.

2. **With the queen on d7 instead of b8.** (Diagram 50)

50



Catastrophe on the h-file (2)

we would have 1.♕h1+ ♔g8 2.♕h7+ ♔f8 3.♕h8+ ♔e7 4.♕xg7+ ♔e8 5.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 6.g7, with no less unpleasant consequences for Black.

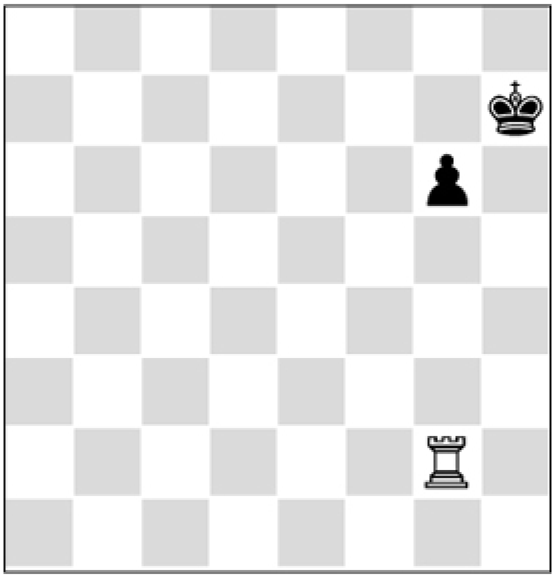
Here we may construe this three-cornered movement by the white queen as an enveloping maneuver. We summarize our discussion as follows: in the case of inadequate resistance (that is, no enemy pawn on h6 or h5), the attacker, after securing the squares to be invaded, penetrates into the 7th or 8th rank, and in the process will not seldom be presented with a raiding move or enveloping maneuver as a kind of reward. (By the way, a revealing occurrence: if a player has conducted the attack correctly over a period of time, fate rewards him with the opportunity for… a raiding move! One might call this a post-war moral.) So far the operation has been as easy to understand as it was simple to carry out. But unfortunately, in real play, there are great obstacles to be overcome, as Section 4 will show.

4. The possible obstacles in the way of a file operation. The block of granite and how to chip away at it. The concept of protected and unprotected obstacles (pawns). The two ways of carrying out an attack against enemy pawns standing in the way. The evolutionary and revolutionary attack.

We have seen how great the significance can be of the successful unrestricted entry into the 7th and 8th ranks. This being the case, it is natural to assume that nature herself may have as it were done something for the protection of this sensitive area, just as the benevolent and wise Mother Nature has given the human heart a brilliantly protected place in the chest behind the ribs. (So well protected is this place, so deeply concealed is the hide-away provided for the heart, that in the case of many persons one might think that they have entered our world heartless. At the same time, in order at once to appease those among my amiable readers who are more feeling, I will confide in passing that heartlessness is a malady of comparatively lesser severity, one that those afflicted by it almost never suffer from.)

We can see this characteristic and natural protective position in Diagram 51.

51

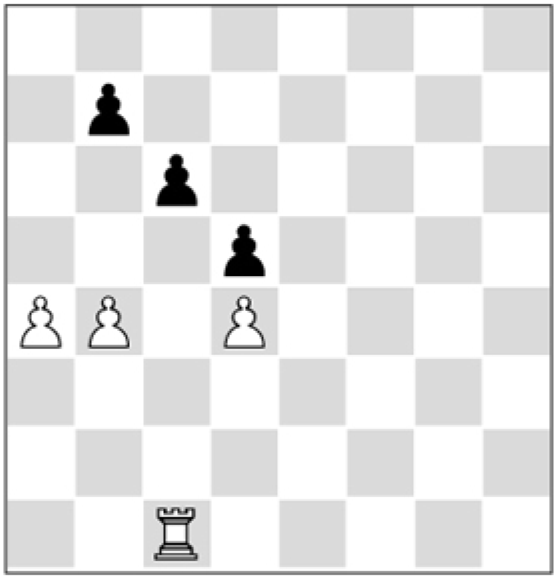


The pawn at g6 is an ‘unprotected’ obstacle

Here the g6-pawn impedes the attempt by the first player to penetrate into the 7th rank. ‘The way to the 7th or 8th rank goes over my dead body,’ this peasant seems to call out to us.

If this enemy pawn is protected by another pawn, it would be utterly futile to bang one’s head against such a block of granite by, shall we say, tripling our pieces along this file. Rather, it would be the dictate of intelligence first to undermine the g-pawn by, perhaps, h2-h4-h5 and h5xg6. After …h7xg6 the granite block will have shriveled up into a defenseless pawn-ling. In Diagram 52, b4-b5 would have this undermining effect.

52



The c6-pawn, covered by the pawn on b7, is the protected obstacle

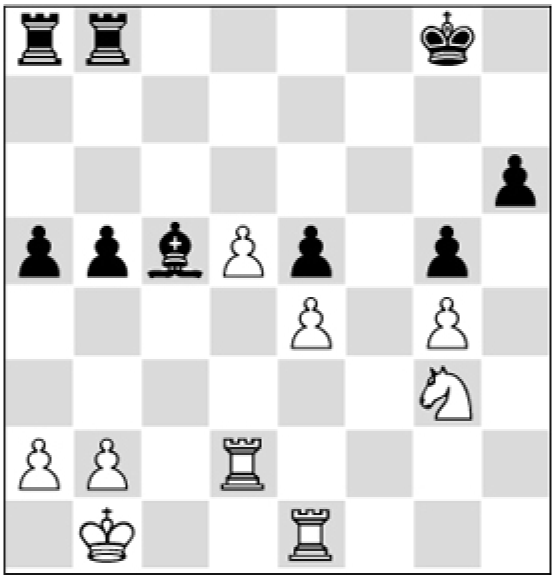
As we have already emphasized, the pawn is to be acknowledged as a reliable defender. Protection by pieces can almost be called a misconception; the pawn alone and by itself offers its protection solidly, patiently, and without complaint.

Hence a ‘protected pawn’ means a pawn that is guarded by one of its colleagues! If our g-pawn is lured away from its confederation of pawns, it will come under attack by a number of pieces. The obvious idea then is to win the pawn through an accumulation of attacking force – firstly for the sake of the gain in material, and secondly to break down the resistance along the file.

This is handled technically by first bringing our pieces into an attacking position. Then there will be a heated struggle over the pawn. Black will defend as often as we attack, so now we try to gain a preponderance by eliminating his defenders, which can be accomplished by (1) driving them away, (2) exchanging them, and (3) shutting off one of the defending pieces. Hence we transfer our attacking fury from the opponent himself to his defenders, a completely normal procedure often practiced at school (in schoolyard brawls, of course).

The following game conclusion (Diagram 53) illustrates this procedure.

53

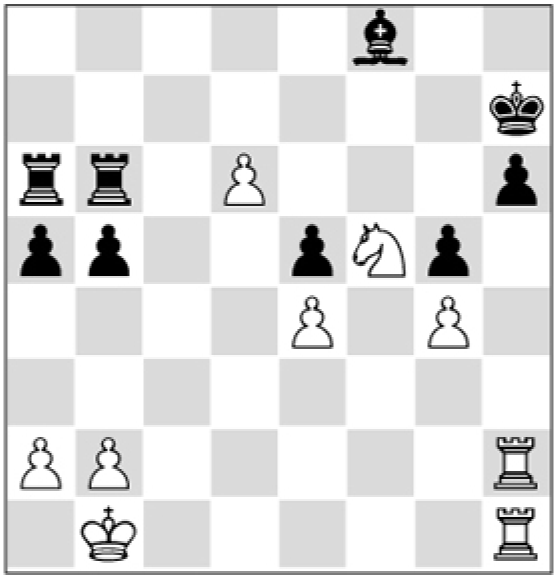


The h-file: a concentrated attack against h6 (evolutionary attack)

1.♖h2 ♔h7 2.♖eh1. White can pile up his attack, for the obstructing pawn at h6 is without pawn protection: 2…♗f8 3.♘f5 ♖b6. Attack and defense balance one another at three pieces each. But with his next move, 4.d6, the defender at b6 is shut out of the fray and the h6-pawn falls, while at the same time the entry into the 7th and 8th ranks is made possible.

If Black’s rooks already stood on the 6th rank (Diagram 54),

54

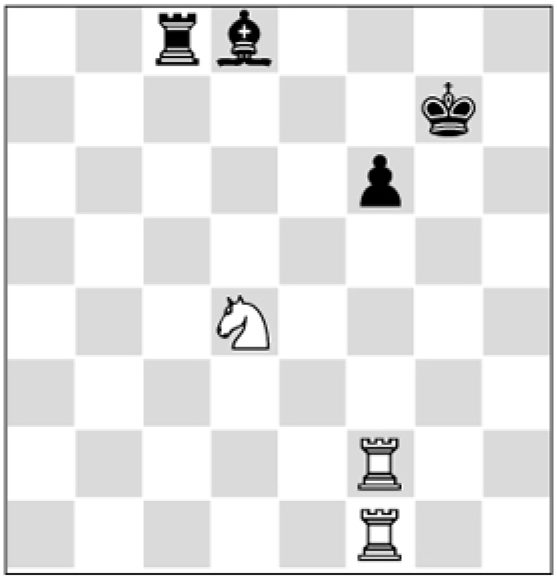


Black to move. Which is better, 4…♖xd6 or 4…♗xd6?

the exchange sacrifice 4…♖xd6 would be possible, but with the rooks so placed 4…♗xd6 would be quite bad, for there would follow 5.♖xh6+ ♔g8 6.♖h8+ ♔f7 7.♖1h7+ ♔f6 and now a quiet move, which comes across as such after the preceding hammer blows – one rook holding the 7th rank, the other the 8th – namely, 8.♖g7 and mate next move!

Or a position like the following:

55



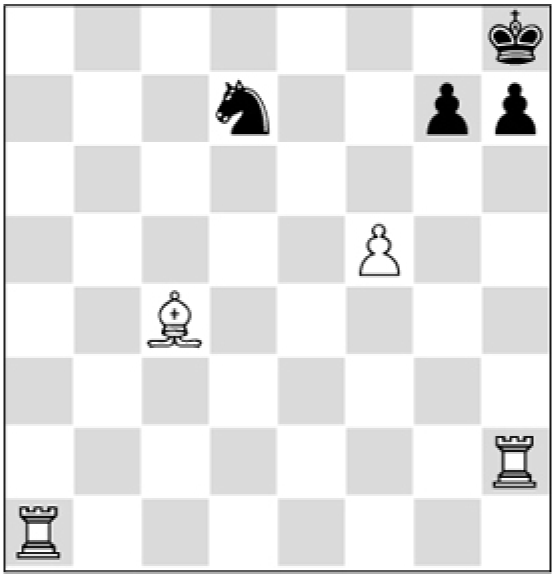
Eliminating the defenders through exchange

1.♘e6+ ♔g6 (or elsewhere) 2.♘xd8 ♖xd8 3.♖xf6 – elimination of the defenders through exchange.

What we have done to the obstructing pawn belongs under the category of evolutionary attack – the whole manner of concentrating one’s forces against a single point, in order eventually to obtain a superiority there – is characteristic of this elimination. The goal, too, was symptomatic – that is, it was partly a matter of material gain (we were eager to win the pawn), which tempted us, and partly it was the ideal, hovering in front of us, of conquering the 7th rank. The fact that these motivations were blended together was a fact of significance.

Quite another picture is shown by the process employed in Diagram 56 (only the most important actors are shown):

56



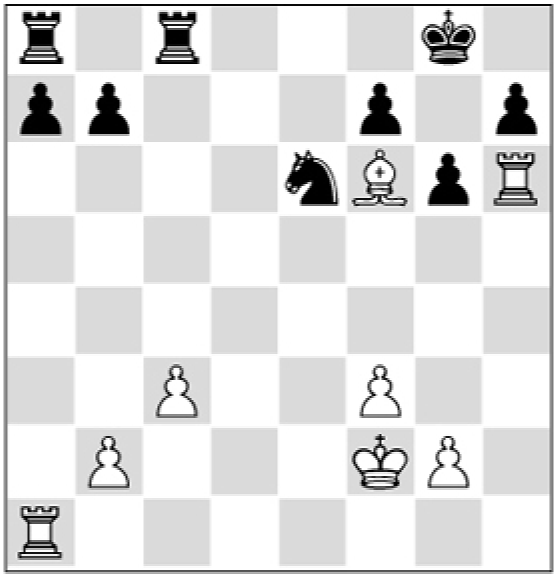
Breakthrough on h7 (the revolutionary attack)

Granted, play along the h-file with 1.♖ah1 would be pointless because of 1…♘f6 or 1…h6, with a block of granite on the file. How else can White make use of the h-file? Answer: He abstains from trying to win the h-pawn and instead does everything (and not shying away from heavy sacrifices) to forcibly get it out of the way – hence 1.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 2.♖h1#.

As simple as this conclusion may be, it seems to me to be of the greatest importance in bringing to full clarity the difference between the evolutionary and the revolutionary forms of attack.

We shall therefore give yet another example (Diagram 57):

57



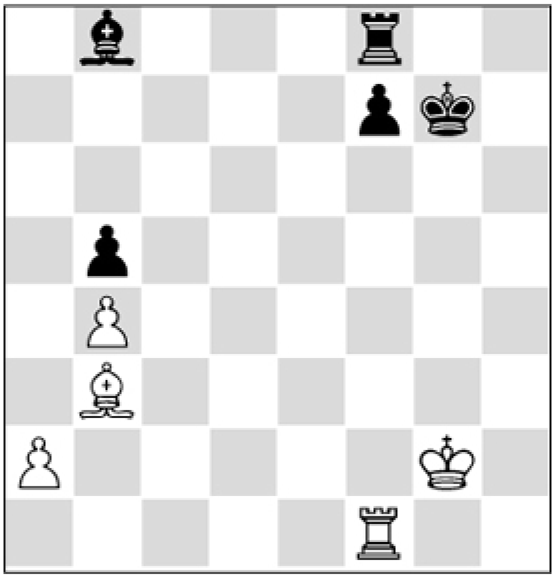
How would the evolutionary and revolutionary attacks be carried out here?

The evolutionary attack would lead to the win of the object of contention with 1.♖ah1 ♘f8 2.♗e7. Eliminating the defender through exchange. The revolutionary attack on the other hand would forgo the capture of the pawn as follows: **1.♖xh7 ♚xh7** We cannot speak here of having won the h7-pawn, for White has in fact given up a whole rook for it. **2.♖h1+ ♚g8 3.♖h8#** The notion of a revolutionary attack consists, as we see here clearly, in the forcible opening of an entry (which before had been inaccessible to us) into the 7th or 8th rank. The one rook sacrifices itself for the sake of its colleague, so that the latter can get access to h8. Yes, even on the sixty-four squares there is still such thing as comradeship…

In what chronological order are these two methods of attack to be applied? Answer: first, we try the concentric attack, attacking the obstructing pawn with several pieces. By doing so an opportunity may be found to force the defending pieces into uncomfortable positions where they will be in each other’s way, for the besieged camp will often suffer from a lack of space. Afterwards we will look *inter alia* for a possibility of a powerful breakthrough, in plain terms a revolutionary mode of attack.

5. The ‘restricted’ advance along one file for the purpose of relinquishing that file for another one, or the indirect utilization of a file. The file as a jumping-off place and its similarity to a diplomatic career.

58



A very simple example of a restricted advance, followed by a crossing maneuver by the rook over to a new file: 1.♖f5xb5 (-b7).

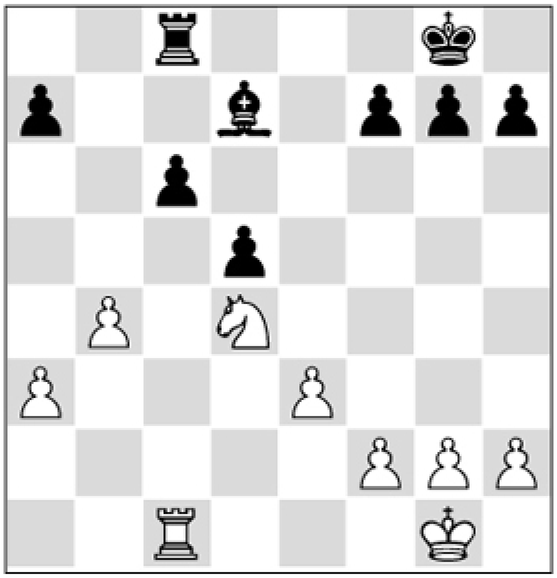
In Diagram 58 the direct utilization of the f-file, with an eventual ♖xf7+ (perhaps after first driving off the protecting rook), would be impossible due to the paucity of material available. The simple ♖f5xb5, however, clearly wins a pawn; later, ♖b7 might be played.

It is important that we examine this maneuver to see its logical content. Since ♖xf7+ doesn’t amount to anything, we cannot speak of a direct utilization of the f-file in the sense of our definition. On the other hand, it would be pushing the civic virtue (ingratitude) too far if we were to maintain that the winning of the b-pawn has absolutely nothing at all to do with the f-file. Where then does the truth lie? Answer: the file in this position was used not directly, not to its fullest extent, but indirectly, as a sort of jumping-off point.

When a man chooses a diplomatic career because he feels he has what it takes to put Lloyd George completely in the shade, he wants to make use of the stated profession. But if he chooses this career in the juvenile hope that he will find himself in genteel circles and eventually will succeed in bringing home the daughter of a multi-millionaire (in dollars), then his chosen profession is only a jumping-off point to… the checkbook of his future father-in-law.

Consider this position (with only the principal actors). White: rook on g1, bishop at e3, pawn at h2; Black with a king at h7 and a pawn on h6. Then 1.♗d4 followed by ♖g7+ would be the direct utilization of the g-file and 1.♖g3 followed by ♖h3 and ♖xh6 the indirect utilization of it.

59



The c-file as a jumping-off point to the a-file

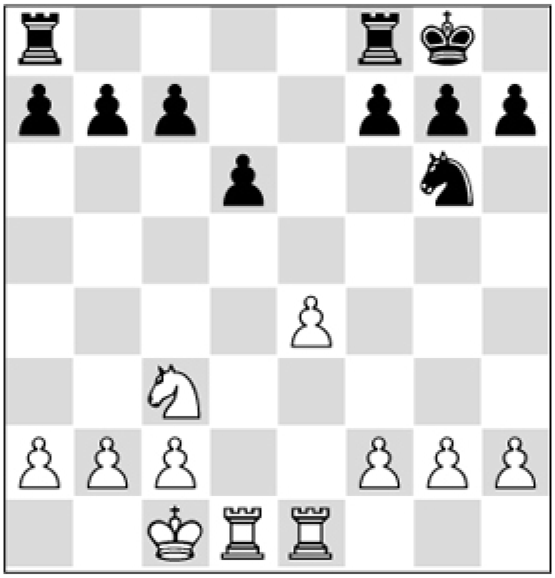
Here, the indirect use of the c-file as a jumping-off point to the a-file would be 1.♖c5-a5 (cf. Nimzowitsch-Allies, Diagram 134, and Thomas-Alekhine, Game 11).

Critics of undistinguished ability are inclined to deny that the distinction just drawn is of any practical value. But for such persons, who trust that through the force of their intellect they are bringing light into the darkness, the former may be of great value, for through their critical efforts the essence of the file finds itself able to emit a radiant illumination. (I could much more simply have said the latter, but I enjoy being able to give these mediocre critics, who cannot or will not grasp the important thing, the conceptual, a welcome target for attack in the shape of a formal mistake – ‘radiant illumination’ sounds all too pathetic!)

6. The outpost. The radius of attack. The fables found in the newspapers. With what piece should we occupy an outpost on a center file, and on a flank? The change of roles and what this proves.

Let us consider Diagram 60:

60



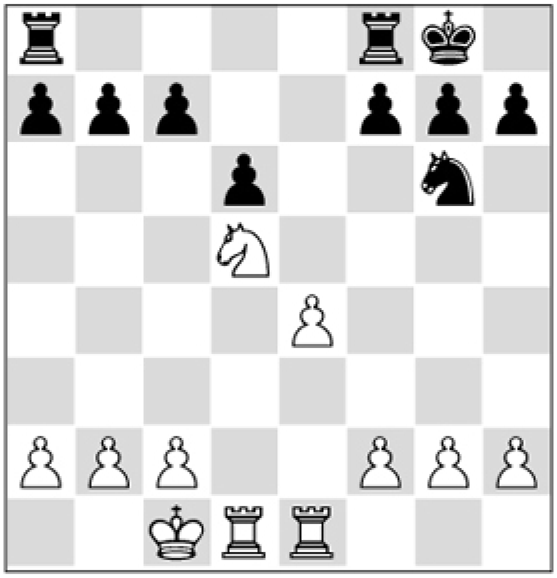
White establishes an outpost on the d-file

White has the center and the d-file, Black has the e-file and a pawn on d6 that watches the center; otherwise the position is level. White, on the move, now attempts to undertake something on the d-file. This would appear difficult, as the d6-pawn represents a block of granite. If White, in spite of the principles laid down in Section 4, wished to make a run against d6 with ♖d2 and ♖ed1, not only my most esteemed reader, no, but also the d6-pawn itself would laugh him to scorn. So we had better keep to principles and seek to undermine d6 with an eventual e4-e5 (see under Section 4). But this, too, may be shown to be impossible, for the enemy e-file is more than capable of countering the intended e4-e5.

So let us give up the ‘d-file’ as such and content ourselves with its indirect utilization, that is, with the advance (short of the 5th rank, as indicated) 1.♖d4, and a subsequent ♖a4. But this maneuver, too, is weak here, for the black queenside is too compact (with an isolated a-pawn, on the other hand, this would have been entirely appropriate, since later in a similar way the e1-rook also could have been brought to the a-file). Since all the attempts have failed, we begin to look around for another base of operations – completely unjustifiably, as the d-file can be made use of here.

The key move is **1.♘d5**. The d5-square in this position constitutes the outpost point; the d5-knight we call the outpost (Diagram 61).

61



d5 is the outpost point, the knight at d5 the outpost

DEFINITION: **By an outpost we mean a piece, usually a knight, on an open file in enemy territory and protected (by a pawn, naturally)**.

The knight, thus protected and supported, in consequence of its radius of attack, exercises a most disturbing effect and thus causes the opponent to weaken his position along the d-file by driving the knight away with …c7-c6. Hence we say:

(1) the outpost forms a basis for fresh attacks, and

(2) the outpost provokes a weakening of the enemy’s powers of resistance on the file in question.

After 1.♘d5 c6 (1…♖c8 would also work, but it would require nerves of steel to leave such a threatening and securely posted knight right in front of one’s nose for hour after hour – it is hard enough to tolerate a harmless fly on one’s nose for a measly five minutes! White plays 2.♘c3, and now the d6-pawn, after an eventual ♖d2 and ♖ed1, will by no means be voicing its mocking laughter…

It is important for the student to realize that the power of an outpost lies fundamentally in its strategic connection with its own hinterland. The outpost does not draw its power from itself but from this hinterland, that is to say, from the open lines and the protecting pawn.

If we were to compare the d5-knight with a newly published newspaper, the rook at d1 would correspond to the capital that stands behind the name of the enterprise. And what role does the e4-pawn play then? Well, the role of the agrarian party. You see, a newspaper has both capital and a unified party behind the scenes; such a paper we can justifiably describe as solidly funded. But should either of these be lacking, our daily paper (the outpost) would all of a sudden lose just about all its prestige and importance.

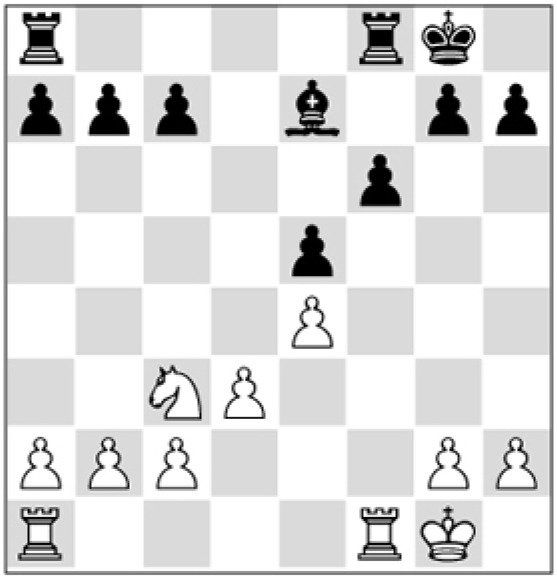
For example, in Diagram 61, if we imagine further a white pawn on d3, the d-file would then be closed (the business capital is exhausted). In this case, 1…c6 2.♘c3 would occur, when the d-pawn is not weak. How could such a pawn be weak when it is not exposed to any attack?

Or Diagram 61 with a pawn on e3 instead of e4. Now the contact with the agrarian party is lost. This is painfully evident after the moves 1…c6 2.♘c3 d5!, when White has achieved nothing; whereas with the pawn at e4 the d6-pawn would remain paralyzed (backward), at least for a long time.

Hence, a file behind it and the protecting pawn at its side are essential to the existence of an outpost.

In the following position, from the Italian Game (we could also add some additional pieces for both sides):

62



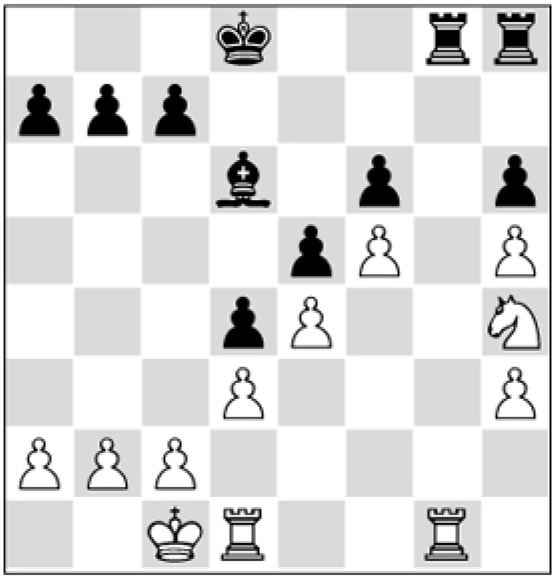
White has an outpost at f5, Black at d4

White has the f-file with an advanced post at f5, Black has the d-file and an outpost at d4. Both open files are for the time being biting on granite (on ‘protected’ pawns). To shock the strength of this granite, a knight is directed to f5 via e2 and g3. Once arrived there, it attacks the point g7, which attack can be further accentuated by ♖f3-g3. The natural response is to drive away the knight with …g7-g6, whereby the strategic mission of the forward post will be regarded as fulfilled, for f6 has now become weak. It is important here to notice that the placing of the knight at f5 became the basis of a fresh attack (against g7).

Quite often the outpost will be exchanged after it arrives at the outpost square. If the attacking player has played correctly, the recapturing piece will compensate fully for the piece that has disappeared. Here a transformation of advantages is the order of the day. Let’s say that after ♘f5 a piece takes it and White recaptures with exf5. White gets the e4-square for a rook or for his other knight and in addition some possibilities of opening the g-file after g2-g4-g5. The f5-pawn would help render the f6-pawn (the object of attack) immobile (see Diagram 62, and also Haken-Giese, Game 5).

The outpost point on a flank file should be occupied by a heavy-caliber piece. (Flank files are the a-, b-, g-, and h-files; the center files are the c-, d-, e-, and f-files.) Here (Diagram 63) we are dealing with a flank file.

63

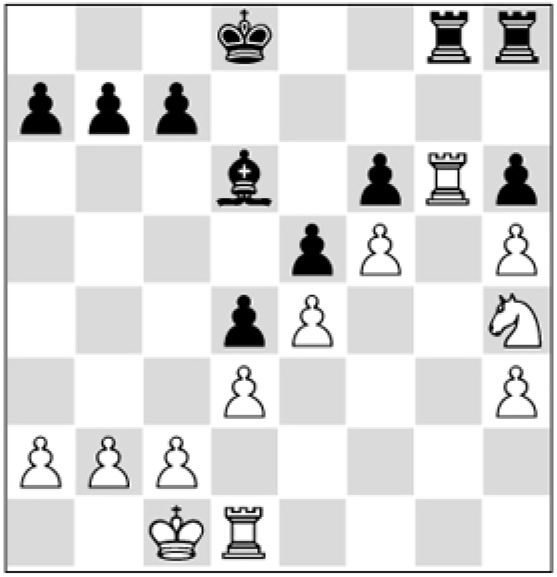


The flank file g. On the outpost at g6 a rook should be placed, not a knight

The occupation of an outpost point with a knight would be of little significance, for the attacking radius of this knight would be meager (still more meager, certainly, would be the attacking radius of a piece on the a- or h-file).

But **1.♖g6!** (Diagram 64) is excellent, since by this move we undertake to seize the heretofore disputed g-file or to obtain other advantages.

64



Role reversal, part 1: the h5-pawn supports the rook at g6

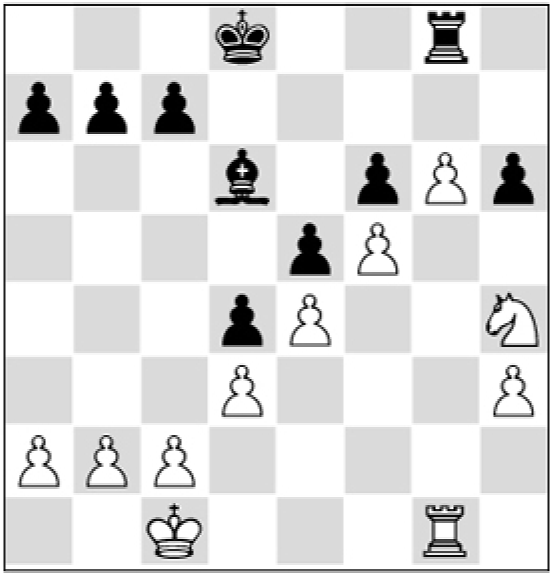
The file was disputed, for it would have been impossible for either of the opponents to move up or down it unchallenged. Only such freedom of movement ensures control of the file in question.

It therefore remains for White to find a suitable point along the file for doubling the rooks (the point of Archimedes, who wanted to turn the world out of its orbit – indeed, if he had only found the point where he could have applied his lever!). If we look for such a point, we shall find it. 1.♖g2? ♖xg2 2.♘xg2 ♖g8, and it is Black who has the g-file. 1.♖g4? ♖xg4 2.hxg4 ♖g8 3.♘g6, when it will be difficult for White to make anything of his backward extra pawn on the g-file. **1.♖g6!** (outpost) **1…♖xg6** (otherwise 2.♖g1, with a successful doubling of the rooks) **2.hxg6**, with a giant of a passed pawn and the possibility (after ♘f3) of ♖g1-g4-h4.

Hence, even though the white g-file is closed after hxg6, a passed pawn has arisen from its ashes, with attacking chances on the h-file. This is an example of the transformation of advantages in the specific case of the exchange of the outpost piece (referred to above).

If we linger for a moment at Diagram 64, we shall, after **1…♖xg6 2.hxg6 ♖g8 3.♖g1**, find ourselves on the track of a characteristic exchange of roles. That is to say, before 1…♖xg6 is played the white h-pawn supports the rook at g6. After the completed exchange, a white rook supports the pawn that has now advanced to g6 (Diagram 65):

65



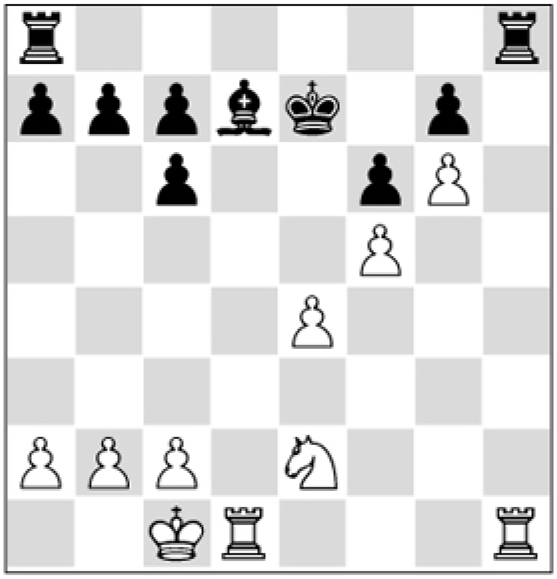
Role reversal, part 2: the rook at g1 supports the pawn at g6

This example, dripping with gratitude and benevolence, also shows that there is a strategic connection that exists between the g-file as such and the pawn (here, the h5-pawn) that protects the outpost point.

We conclude this chapter with a sample game, which by the way we play through purely for pedagogical reasons and not merely for fun.

Nimzowitsch-Amateur (Diagram 66):

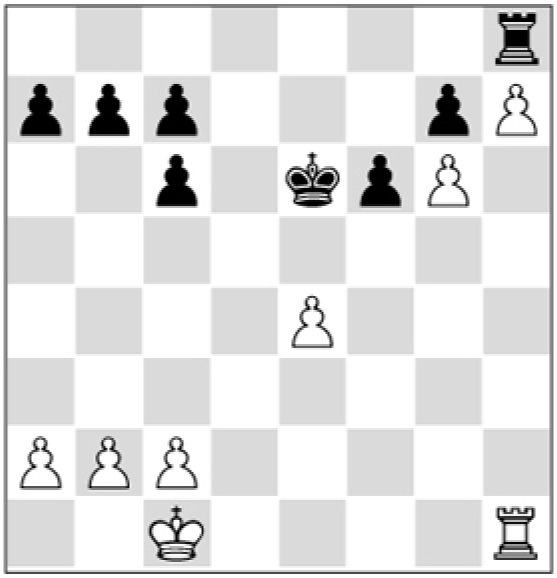
66



1.♞f4 Development is a principle worthy of attention all the way into the endgame, but one that is neglected by beginners even in the opening phase.

1…♜ag8 2.♜h7! We ask that the reader regard this move as nothing more than an occupation of an advanced post – it could also be seen as penetration into the 7th rank – played for pedagogical consideration. **2…♝e8 3.♜dh1 ♜xh7 4.gxh7** The transformation of the ‘open file’ into a ‘passed pawn.’ Good, too, would be 4.♖xh7 ♔f8 5.♘h5 and an opportune sacrifice of the knight at f6. **4…♜h8 5.♞g6+ ♝xg6 6.fxg6** Whereby the passed pawn becomes a ‘protected’ passed pawn. **6…♚e6** (Diagram 67)

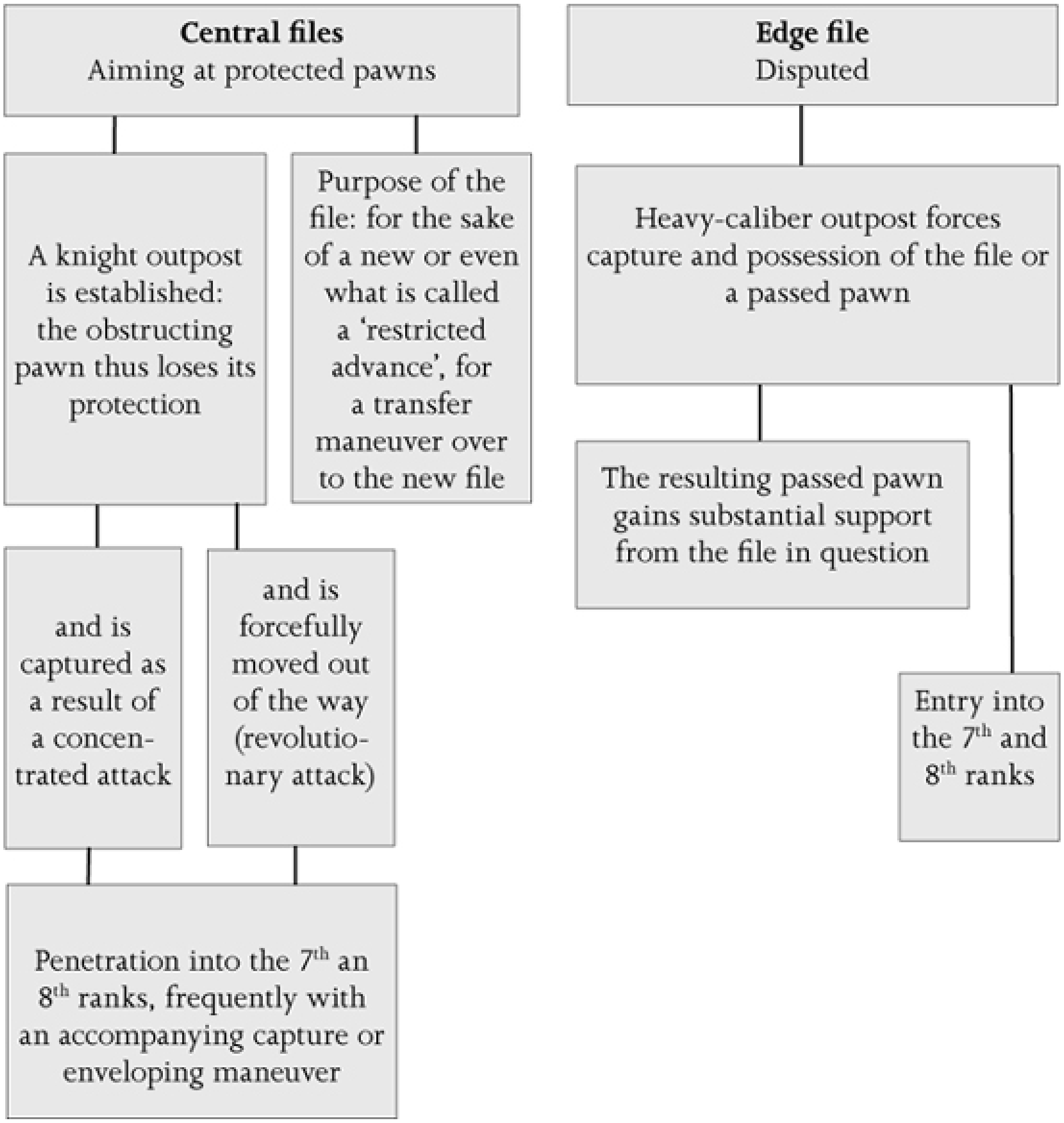
67



White to move. By means of a ‘restricted advance’ he prevents any attempt by Black to free himself

7.♜h5! This ‘restricted advance’ prevents any attempt by Black to free himself with a possible …♔e5 or …f6-f5 (approaching the g6-pawn). **7…b6 8.c4** Still more paralysing would be 8.b4, but White has other plans. **8…c5 9.a4 a5 10.b3 c6 11.♚d2 ♚d6 12.♚e3 ♚e6 13.♚f4 ♚d6 14.♚f5!** Now White’s plan for breaking through becomes clear. By means of zugzwang he gets in the move e4-e5, when the pawn on f6 disappears and an entry for the white rook into f7 is made accessible. **14…♚e7 15.e5 fxe5 16.♚xe5 ♚d7 17.♜f5** Now we see clearly that 7.♖h5 possessed all the elements of the maneuver we have called a ‘restricted advance on the file,’ for ♖h5-f5-f7 must for better or worse, despite the period of time intervening, be considered an appropriate transfer maneuver of the rook onto a new file. Black resigned, since ♖f7 followed by ♖xg7 would create two connected passed pawns.

Little schema for the open file



Central files
Aiming at protected pawns

A knight outpost is established: the obstructing pawn thus loses its protection

Purpose of the file: for the sake of a new or even what is called a ‘restricted advance’, for a transfer maneuver over to the new file

and is captured as a result of a concentrated attack

and is forcefully moved out of the way (revolutionary attack)

Penetration into the 7th an 8th ranks, frequently with an accompanying capture or enveloping maneuver

Edge file
Disputed

Heavy-caliber outpost forces capture and possession of the file or a passed pawn

The resulting passed pawn gains substantial support from the file in question

Entry into the 7th and 8th ranks

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Chapter 3

The Seventh and Eighth Ranks

1. Introduction and general remarks. Endgame or middlegame. Choosing an object of attack. The injunction against ‘swimming.’

As we saw in Chapter 2, penetration into the enemy territory, in plain terms the 7th and 8th ranks, constitutes the logical outcome of play along a file. I have tried to illustrate this entry with particularly striking – because catastrophic -examples. But in counterpoint to this I must stress emphatically that in the normal course of events – catastrophes of every kind are after all the result of serious errors on the part of one’s opponent and are therefore not to be thought of as normal – the 7th rank will be seized only later, at the beginning of the endgame phase. We are therefore inclined to regard the 7th and 8th ranks as *endgame advantages*, this despite countless games that were decided already in the middlegame as a result of operations on the ranks mentioned. The student should, however, try to break into the enemy base of operations as early as possible, and should he at first suffer the unpleasant experience that the invading rook is unable to achieve anything, or is even lost, he should not on that account let himself become discouraged.

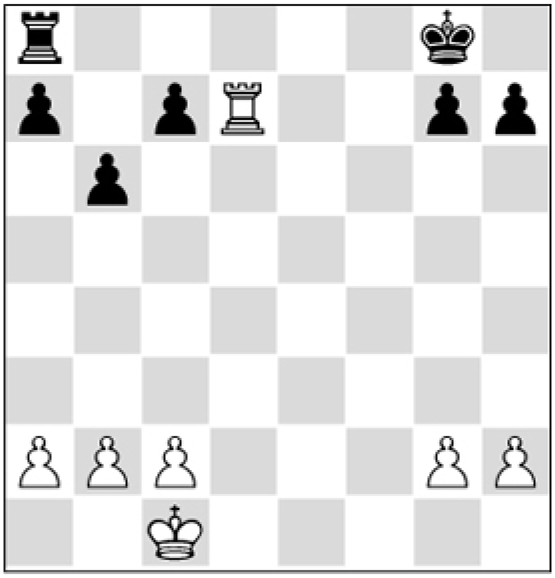
In our system it is the practice to instruct the student as soon as is practicable on the strategic elements of endgame play. Accordingly, after discussing the ‘7th and 8th Ranks,’ the ‘Passed Pawn,’ and ‘Exchanging’, we shall insert a chapter that really belongs under the heading ‘Positional Play’ but which for pedagogical reasons has to be treated earlier. And after assimilating this information the student will find that knowledge of the 7th and 8th ranks is not merely an instrument for administering checkmate but is, much more, a keenly sharpened weapon for use in the endgame. As already remarked, by its nature it is both, but the endgame aspect nevertheless predominates.

It is of the greatest importance to accustom ourselves to undertaking operations on the 7th rank in such a manner that from the beginning we have a definite, predetermined object of attack. It is characteristic of the less-knowledgeable player that he chooses the opposite path: he ‘swims.’ That is, he looks now to the right, now to the left. No – choose a target of attack, the rule tells us. Such a target can, as we know from experience, be a pawn or a point. It can be either, but to swim around aimlessly – that would be strategic disgrace!

2. The convergent and the revolutionary attack upon the 7th rank. The conquering of a point (or pawn) with an ‘acoustical echo’ (that is, with a simultaneous check).

In Diagram 68, White chooses c7 as his target of attack.

68

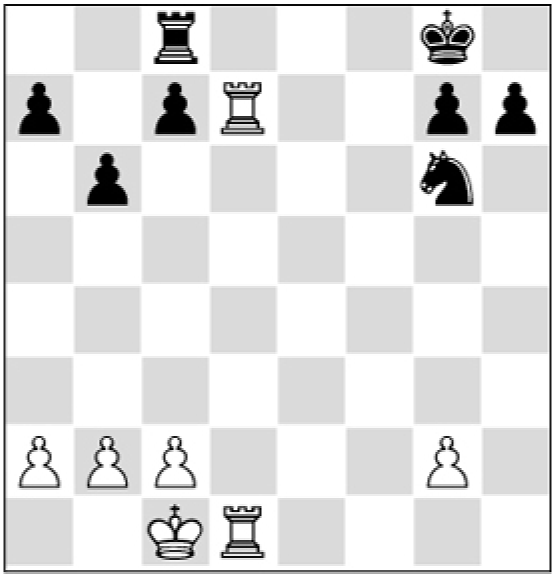


The 7th rank

After **1…♜c8** attack and defense are for the moment in the balance. Completely analogously to how we proceed in the case of a file, we now seek to disturb this equilibrium to the advantage of the attacking side. So, in this position, suppose there is a white bishop at f2 and a black knight at g6; we can disturb the equilibrium with 2.♗g3. With the bishop at f1 instead of f2 we could do so with 2.♗a6 (eliminating the defender).

Let us consider the position in Diagram 68 with an additional white rook at d1, Black still in possession of the knight on g6; then let us remove White's h-pawn (Diagram 69).

69



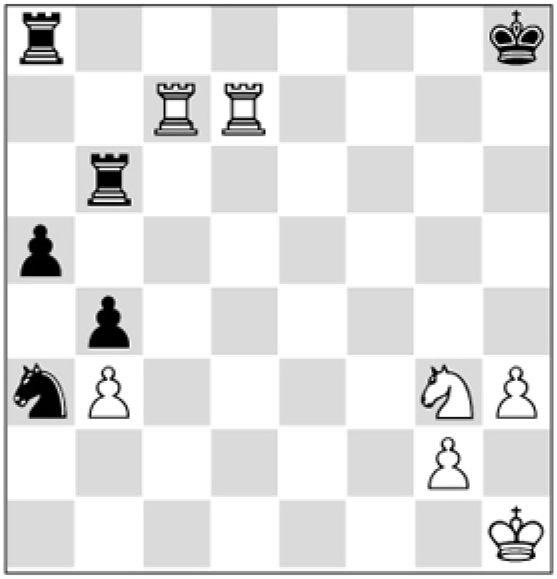
The 7th rank

With the attacking target at c7, the logical follow-up would now be **♖1d4-c4** or the rook exchange **1.♖d8+ ♖xd8 2.♖xd8+ ♘f8** followed by the return of the rook to the 7th rank (3.♖c8 c5 4.♖c7).

In Diagram 68 the maneuver of the king to c6 would be the course to aim for, since c7 is our chosen objective.

The matter takes a similar course in Diagram 70.

70



Black to move. Struggle for the point h7

White chooses the point h7 as his target of attack, since this point would give him the chance for a deadly concentrated maneuver. **1…♖h6 2.♘f5 ♖h5 3.g4 ♖xh3+ 4.♔g2 ♖xb3 5.♖h7+** White has arrived there, the defender (the black rook) had to flee; then White takes over h7 and gives mate: **5…♔g8 6.♖cg7+ ♔f8 7.♖h8#** The nature of a concentrated attack against a chosen object of attack along the 7th rank would seem to be sufficiently illuminated by this example.

Before we pass over to the revolutionary mode of attack we wish to emphasize the importance of the following rule:

RULE: **If an object of attack proceeds to flee, the rook should attack it from the rear!**

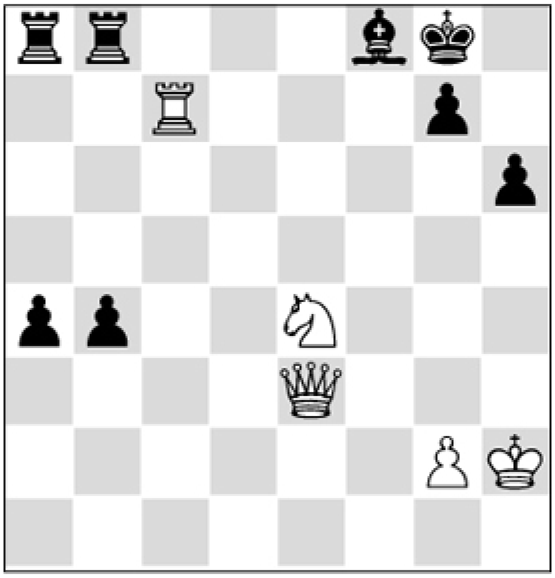
For example, a rook on the 7th rank holds the b7-pawn under attack. If now 1…b5, then 2.♖b7 rather than an attack from the side from the 5th rank. This rule finds its explanation in these facts:

1. The 7th rank is to be held for as long as possible, since it is here that fresh targets of attack may present themselves.
2. The enveloping attack (such as our ♖b7) is the strongest form of attack (ranked in ascending order: (a) frontal; (b) side; (c) rear), which
3. often forces the opponent to undertake self-cramping protective measures. (In the position considered above, attacking the b-pawn from

the side would make possible a comfortable defense with …♖b8.)

In Diagram 71 we ‘choose’ the point g7.

71



A ‘forcible’ conquest of the target h7

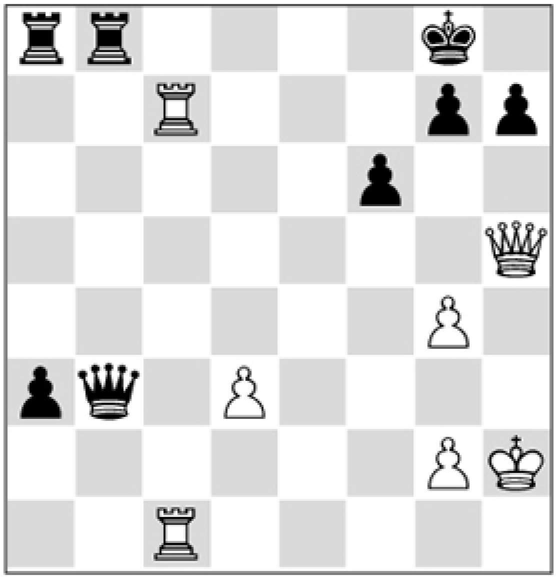
The fact that this square is well protected does not cause us to tremble. We ‘concentrate’ our attack with 1.♘g3 a3 (the passed pawns are very threatening) 2.♘f5 a2 3.♕e5 (now threatening mate by 4.♖xg7+) 3… a1♕, when g7 is protected and White loses.

Hence, g7 was a poorly chosen target of attack. The right one is h7, whose conquest follows from a ‘revolutionary’ mode of attack: **1.♞f6+ gxf6 2.♛e6+ ♚h8 3.♛d7** Or **1.♞f6+ ♚h8** (Black is single-minded) **2.♛xh6+** (White, still more so!) **2…gxh6 3.♜h7** and mate on the chosen point.

This example shows us the idea of a revolutionary attack applied to the 7th rank. The one pawn is forcibly removed so that the action along the 7th rank can be extended to its neighboring point. It is this latter, ‘neighboring’ point that we had in mind as our target of attack.

Another example is shown in Diagram 72.

72



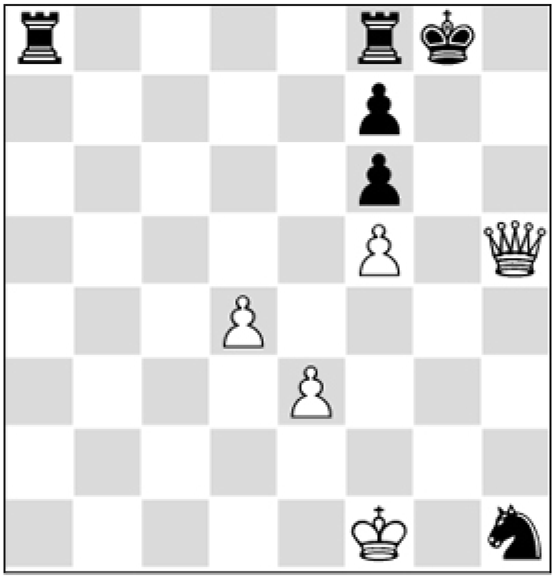
An attacking target at h7 (forcible conquest)

Here, g7 would be difficult to attack (although if the g4-pawn were absent this would be easier: 1.♕g4 g6 2.♕h4 h5 3.♕xf6); e.g., 1.♖d7 (threatening 2.♖cc7) 1…♖c8, or 1. ♖1c4 (threatening 2.♕f7+) 1…♖f8. Correct is **1.♜xg7+** (h7 is the target of attack) **1…♚xg7 2.♜c7+ ♚h8 3.♛xh7#**.

The capture on g7 ‘extended’ the action along the 7th rank all the way to h7. If **2…♚f8**, 3.♕xh7 would have won, since this rank would then have been completely untenable for Black. But more precise would have been to transport the queen with gain of time, thus **3.♛h6+ ♚e8 4.♛e3+ ♚f8 5.♛e7+** (entering the 7th rank with ‘acoustic overtones’) **5…♚h8 6.♛g7#**. This last maneuver requires explanation. It is a typical maneuver, since by its means any approach by the enemy reserves can be prevented.

Let us examine another position (Diagram 73).

73

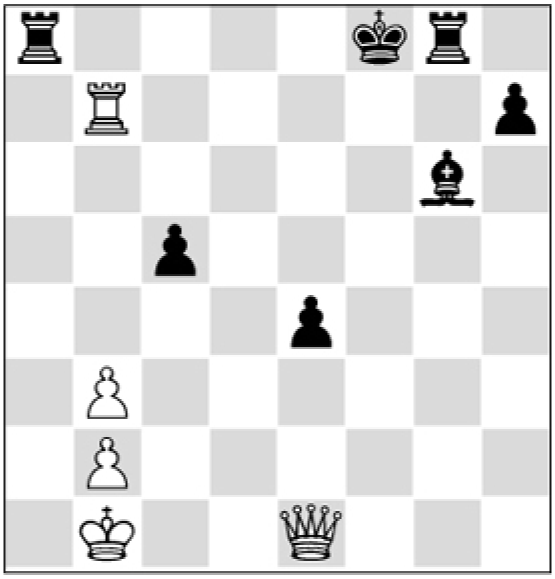


Winning the h1-knight with check

White wants to capture the knight with check; this he accomplishes with **1.♕g4+ ♚h7 2.♕h3+ ♚g7 3.♕g2+ ♚h6** and now **4.♕xh1+**. That is, we drive the king to the desired side without relinquishing contact with the piece (or point) to be won.

Consider Diagram 74.

74



Seizing e7 with check (mate in four moves)

The point to be won here would be e7. 1.♕h4 or 1.♕f2+ ♔e8 2.♕xc5 would, however, fail miserably to 2…e3+ and mate by …♖a1. Correct is **1.♛f1+ ♚e8 2.♛b5+ ♚f8 3.♛xc5+ ♚e8 4.♛e7#**. We could state the problem as follows: White wins the c5-pawn with check. After 1.♕f1+ ♔e8 2.♕b5+ White makes contact with the c5-square, and at the same time does not lose its 'driving effect' against Black's king. After 1.♕f1+ ♔e8 2.♕b5+ ♔f8 3.♕xc5+ White both contacts e7 and exerts a driving effect on the enemy king (the king is forced to e8).

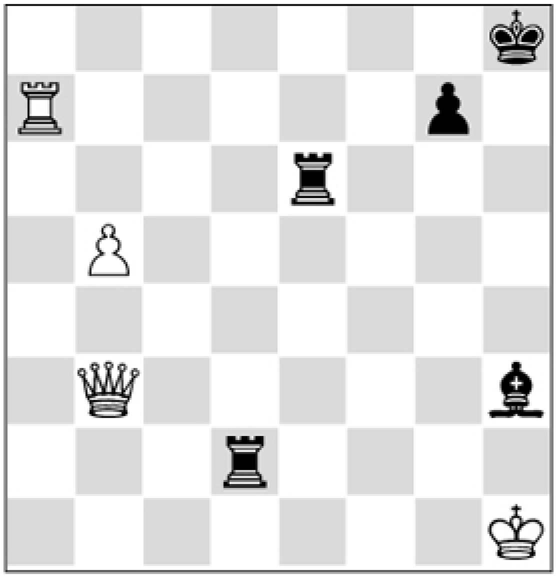
3. The five special cases on the seventh rank.

1. The 'absolute' 7th rank, with passed pawns.
2. Doubled rooks giving perpetual check.
3. The drawing mechanism with rook + knight.
4. The marauding raid on the 7th rank.
5. Combined play on the 7th and 8th ranks (enveloping maneuver in the corner)

By the 'absolute' 7th rank we mean the 7th rank that boxes in the opposing king. An example: White has a rook on a7; Black has a king on f8 and a pawn on f6. But if the pawn were on f7 our control of the 7th rank would not be absolute.

(1) *The first special case*. Control of the 7th is absolute, and well-advanced passed pawns as a rule win in nearly every case. Example: White has a king on h1, a rook on e7, and a pawn on b6; Black's king is at h8 and his rook at d8. White plays b6-b7, when ♖e7-c7-c8+ cannot be prevented. If the black king had been at g6 the game would have been drawn.

75

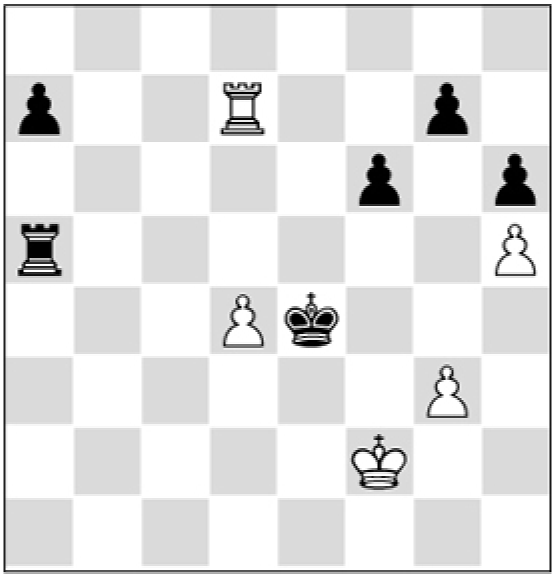


Example for the first special case

In Diagram 75, decisive is **1.♕xh3+ ♜h6 2.♕xh6+ gxh6 3.b6**, for now White's control of the 7th rank is absolute. Were this not so, that is, if the pawn still stood on its original square g7, then the game would have been drawn by 3…♚h7.

In a position from Lasker-Tarrasch, Berlin 1918 (Diagram 76),

76

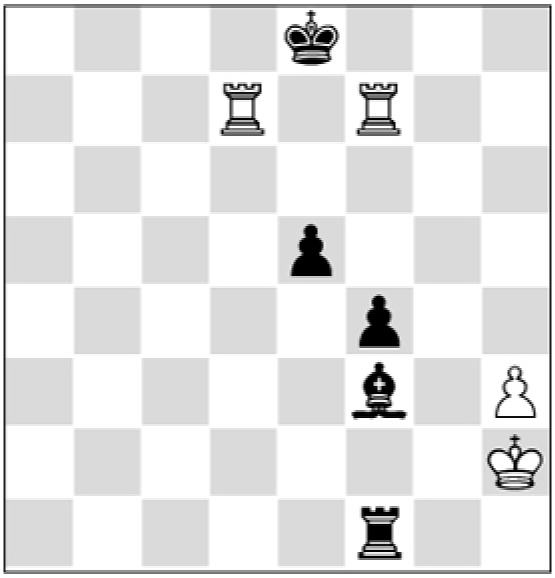


Lasker-Tarrasch (Berlin 1918). How should White reply to 1…♖a2+?

Lasker, in a note, demonstrates the win after 1…♖a2+ 2.♔g1?, namely 2…a5 3.♖xg7 a4 4.♖g6 a3 5.♖xf6 ♖b2. If White's g-pawn now stood on g2, 6.♔h2 would give him drawing chances. But Black's control of the 7th rank is absolute, so he wins. But interesting after 1…♖a2+ would be White's attempt, with 2.♔e1!, to neutralize the 7th rank. Lasker executes this plan with 1…♖a2+ 2.♔e1! a5 3.♔d1 a4 4.♔c1 a3 5.♔b1 and a draw.

(2) *The second special case* (Diagram 77):

77

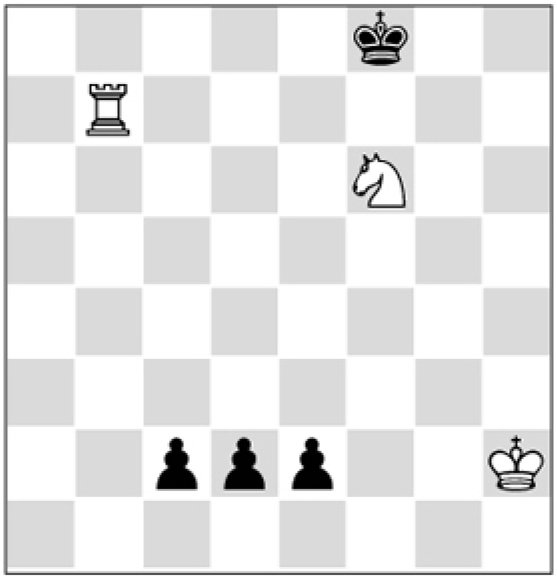


The second special case

Drawn by perpetual check. This is of interest in view of a psychological error that one commonly finds. White, a less experienced player, sees the desperate situation of his king and holds the draw with 1.♖fe7+, correctly recognizing that 1.♖de7+? would have granted his opponent's king a gradual escape to a safe haven (1.♖de7+ ♔d8 2.♖d7+ ♔c8 3.♖c7+ ♔b8 and White has no more checks). After **1.♖fe7+ ♔f8 2.♖f7+ ♔g8 3.♖g7+ ♔h8 4.♖h7+** (4.♖g1?? ♖f2+!) **4…♔g8 5.♖hg7+ ♔h8 6.♖h7+ ♔g8** he looks his opponent in the eye – does he really think he can escape? – then repeats the checks as before a few times, then finally (for the sake of variety) checks with the other rook, 7.♖dg7+, after which the game is lost for him since the king can get away to b8. From which we draw the moral conclusion that (1) variety is not always advantageous, and (2) the rook at d7 was a dutiful sentinel, and as such should not have been needlessly disturbed.

(3) *The third special case*. The drawing mechanism of rook + knight (perpetual check). Diagram 78:

78

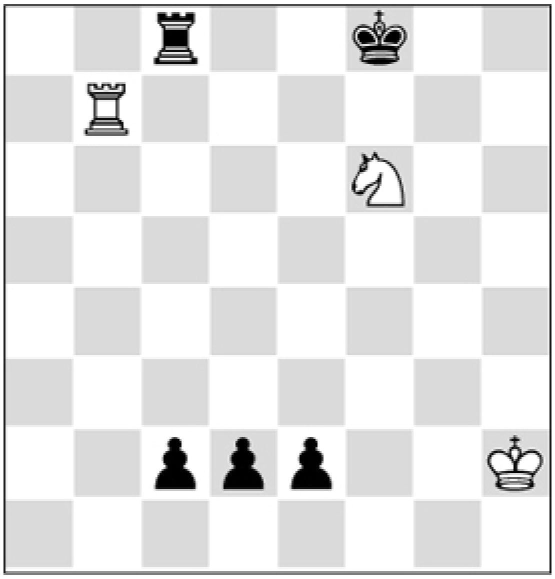


Drawing mechanism (perpetual check) of rook plus knight

Black has three young little queens; White seeks to bring about a perpetual check. Because 1.♘h7+ ♔e8 2.♘f6+ fails to 2…♔d8, the draw comes about with the solution **1.♖d7**, since after, for example, 1…e1♕, the drawing mechanism works perfectly; e.g., 2.♘h7+ ♔g8 3.♘f6+, when 3…♔h8 would be suicide. Note that the key move 1.♖d7 brings the rook and knight into strategic contact.

In the same position, let us imagine a black rook on c8 (Diagram 78a):

78a

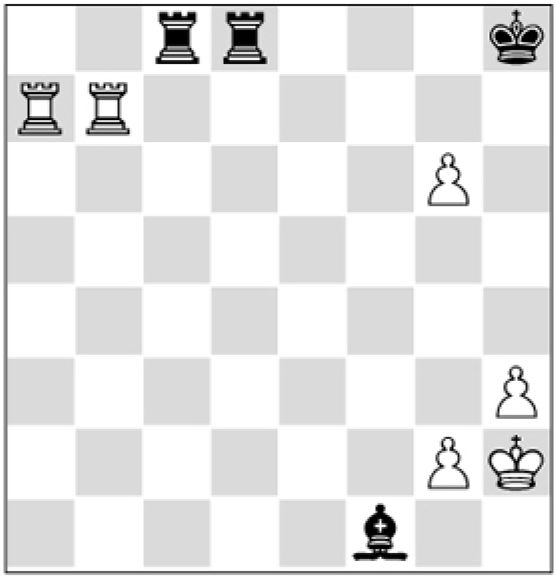


The same position but with a black rook at c8

Then 1.♖d7 would no longer suffice (because of 1…♖c6), but at the same time this would not be necessary, for Black’s own rook prevents the flight of the king and so makes the sentinel on d7 superfluous. Hence **1.♘h7+ ♚e8 2.♘f6+ ♚d8?? 3.♖d7#**. That black king was clever, committing suicide in the middle of the board. A less capable monarch would for this purpose have preferred the corner of the board.

(4) *The fourth special case*. This is a quite simple case, but it is essential to discuss it in view of the very complicated fifth case. It consists of a driving maneuver: the king is driven out of the corner, whereupon there follows a marauding raid.
See Diagram 79.

79

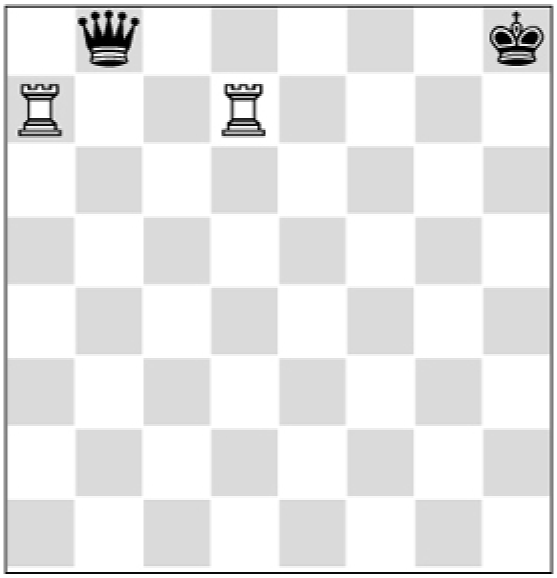


Example of the fourth special case. A driving maneuver plus a marauding raid

1.♖h7+ ♚g8 2.♖ag7+ ♚f8 3.♖f7+, winning the bishop. A necessary condition for success, however, is the protected position of the rook at h7, for otherwise 3…♔g8 would prevent the capture of the bishop on f1. To be noted in this fourth special case is the ability of the rooks to chase the enemy king out of the corner all the way to the 3rd square (on the f- or c-file, then). This capability is the foundation of case #5.

(5) *The fifth special case*. See Diagram 80.

80

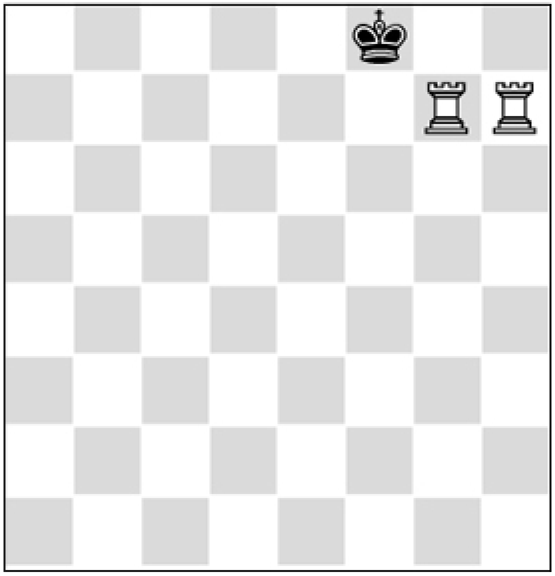


Example of the fifth special case

White, who is minded to take over the 8th rank, tries to accomplish this in an underhanded way, inasmuch as the direct way looks unfeasible because of its protection by the queen. He seizes the corner, at the same time driving the king out of it, and in so doing makes a place for an enveloping attack by the rook – **1.♖h7+ ♔g8 2.♖ag7+ ♔f8** and now **3.♖h8+**, winning the queen.

The position that arises after the rook checks on h7 and g7 (Diagram 81) is for us the thematic starting point of similar maneuvers on the 7th and 8th ranks.

81



The basis of the enveloping maneuver

The analysis of this starting position shows us two rooks capable of an enveloping maneuver, but also a nimble opposing king, whose contact with the g7-rook saves him from the worst (mate at h8). So long as this contact is maintained, checkmate cannot be carried out. Here the king is rather like someone taking a stroll and then suddenly threatened by a robber. No sooner does the robber raise his weapon-hand when the stroller seizes his arm and does not let go of it, for he knows that as long as contact is maintained the robber cannot strike with the decisive blow.

So we have the following rules:

RULE 1. **The king who is threatened by an enveloping attack seeks to maintain contact with the ‘closer’ rook for as long as possible. The enveloping rook, on the other hand, must try to shake loose from this contact, without, however, changing the position of the rooks.**

RULE 2. **The king strives to remain in the corner; the enveloping rook must and will drive him out of it.**

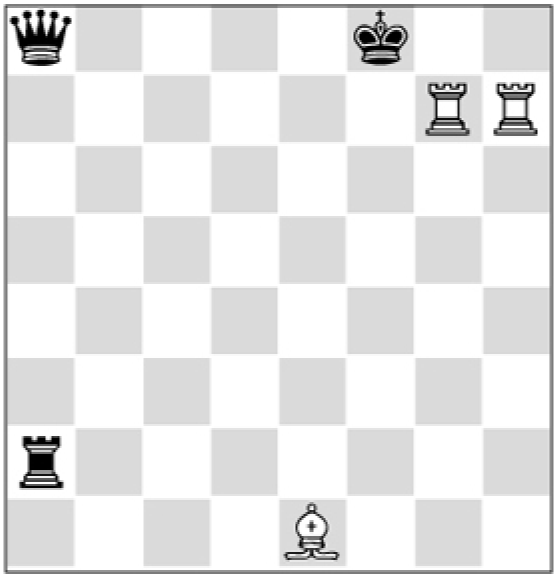
Proceeding from the starting position, White can try three different kinds of maneuvers:

(a) for immediate material gain;

(b) for a mating combination by breaking off ‘contact’ between the king and rook;
(c) for a tempo-winning combination.

Maneuver (a) we have already considered. If, say, an enemy queen stands anywhere on her first rank, there will result, in the position in Diagram 81, ♖h8+, winning the queen by giving up the rook at g7.
In maneuver (b), contact between king and rook is interrupted either by protecting the g7-rook (by a pawn or piece) or by driving off the king by a check from another piece. Consider Diagram 82.

82

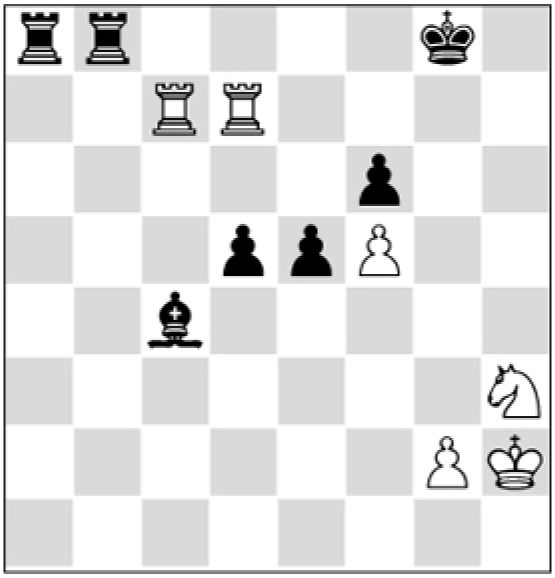


The contact between king and rook is interrupted

The play is now **1.♗b4+ ♚e8**, when the rooks now have a free hand to administer the fatal blow **2.♖h8+**.
Instead of a bishop at e1 we might imagine a white pawn at e6. The continuation would be **1.e7+ ♚e8 2.♖h8+** (the enveloping maneuver now made possible), but now the black king has gained a flight square that before was still closed to him: **2…♚d7**. But this fact plays no role, for the luft we have permitted him was, alas, poisoned!: **3.e8♕+** and mate in a few moves.

Regarding this motif let us consider Diagram 83.

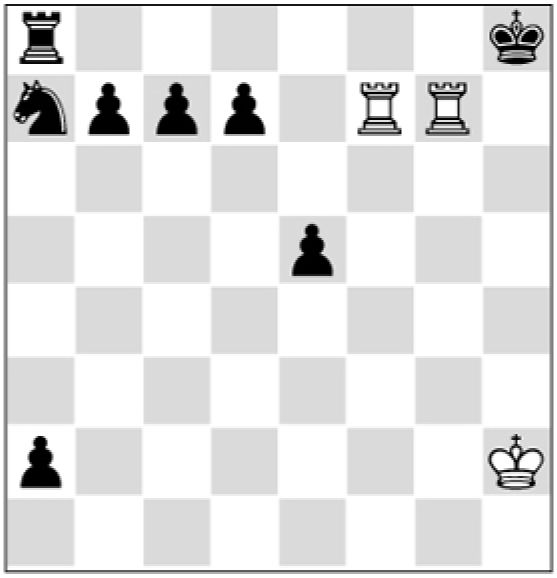
83



First, White brings about the thematic starting position that we saw in Diagram 81: **1.♖g7+** Weaker would be 1.♘f2, threatening 2.♘g4, because of 1…♗e2 2.♖xd5 ♖a4, intending 3…♖f4. **1…♚f8 2.♖h7** Threatening mate. **2…♚g8 3.♖cg7+ ♚f8**, and now **4.♘g5+ fxg5 5.f6** and mate on h8 next. Or **4.♘g5! d4! 5.♘e6+ ♝xe6** (forced) **6.fxe6** followed by the driving of the king from g7 into the open with e6-e7+ and death from poison after the king reaches d7: **6.fxe6** followed by **7.e7+ ♚e8 8.♖h8+ ♚d7 9.e8♕+**, winning easily, even with Black still having one or two passed pawns more, for there would come into play that knack that rooks have and which we have already emphasized – the ability to attack the fleeing pawns from behind.

See Diagram 84.

84



Gaining a tempo. White wins

With **1.♖h7+ ♔g8 2.♖fg7+ ♔f8** the starting position would be reached, but what then? Neither 3.♖h8+ nor breaking the contact between king and rook is feasible. Of course, if the white king were already at g5, then ♔h6, etc., would follow. But as matters stand it would appear that White has to be content with perpetual check. But here, appearances are deceiving; there follows **3.♖xd7**, threatening mate on h8. Hence **3…♔g8**. Now White repeats the little maneuver **4.♖dg7+ ♔f8 5.♖xc7**, when again Black is forced to play **5…♔g8**, there being no time for the dreamt-of …a1♕. (If our opponent has no time to do something that otherwise would in every respect be beneficial to him, and in fact because he feels compelled instead to make a positional move irrelevant to his aims while his opponent is carrying forward with his plans, the latter has clearly won a tempo.) There follows **6.♖cg7+**. Before feasting on the b7-pawn he whets his appetite by giving this check! But no, he creates a potential threat – that is the meaning.

Be that as it may, this is a fine game, fine as the legend of Svyatogor! This Russian hero, symbol of the fertile arable land, once found himself in a terrible fight with an evil spirit (I believe it was a dragon). He won this battle by slipping to the ground at the critical moment. From this contact with Mother Earth a miracle occurred: has was again able to draw sufficient strength to stand firm until his opponent tired. Just as miraculous in our case is contact with the ‘starting position’ that White ever strives to bring about.

The conclusion to our game proceeds in a similar vein: **6…♚f8 7.♜xb7 ♚g8 8.♜bg7+** 8.♖xa7 would still be a gross blunder because of 8…a1♕. **8…♚f8 9.♜xa7 ♜xa7 10.♜xa7**, winning the a2-pawn and the game.

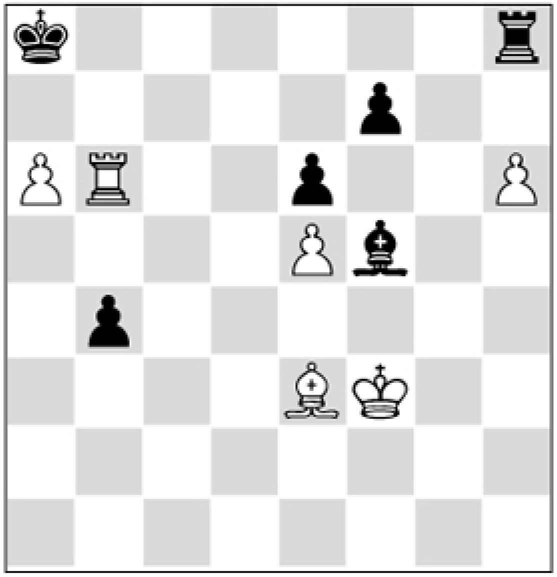
In summary we may say that in continuation (c) White draws fresh attacking power through ‘contact with the starting position – or, more simply, by bringing about the starting position, he creates a mate threat and with it gains time for his marauding expedition, that is, a gain of tempo.

With this we have sufficiently illustrated the fifth special case in all three of its forms. Our discussion has made clear that the ‘starting position’ must always be brought about first. So our ‘romance’ begins (corresponding to the ‘first encounter’ in romance novels between her and him). Then the attacker must choose among the styles of attack under (a), (b), and (c) and then confidently let the aforementioned chess romance take its course. This all the more so, as we have revealed to him *inter alia* the most difficult thing of all, namely the art of loosening if necessary the connection between the king on f8 and the rook at g7.

In conclusion, two game finishes and a little schema.

Diagram 85 illustrates the position after White’s 50th move at the tournament at Vilnius, 1912.

85

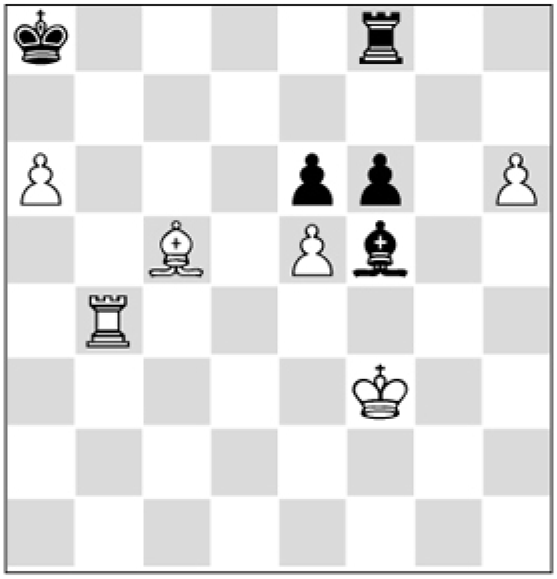


Nimzowitsch-Dr. Bernstein, Vilnius 1912

My opponent played **50…♜f8** here, looking to reduce the material (with …f7-f6) to the point where there would not be enough left to win. But I calmly replied **51.♜xb4 f6**, for now I ‘fabricated from my component parts’ the first special case of the 7th rank – a passed pawn and absolute control of the rank – already well known to me at that time. It’s rather like a sausage maker assembling a fully-fledged sausage from individual parts, only with the difference that my parts are clear and chemically pure, whereas those of the sausage maker are shrouded in a mythical darkness.

The game continued **52.♝c5** (Diagram 86):

86

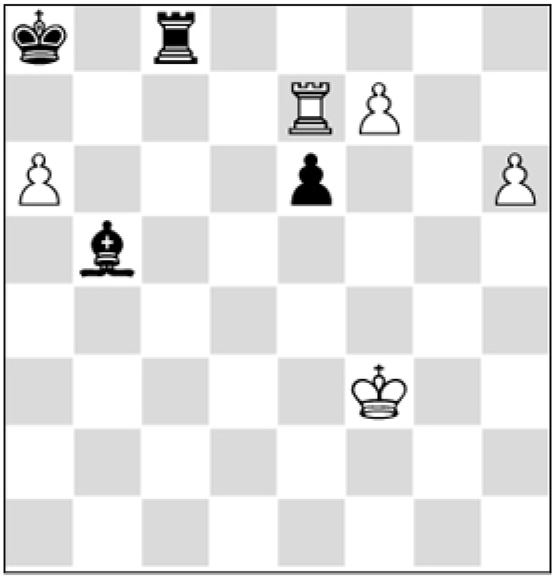


52…♜c8 Forced, as 52…♖f7 succumbs to 53.♖b7 ♖xb7 54.axb7+ ♔xb7 55.exf6, when the bishop on f5 is over-committed. **53.exf6 ♜xc5 54.f7** The passed pawn! **54…♜c8 55.♜b7** The absolute 7th rank! – my opponent's material superiority is an illusion.

'All this is brilliantly conceived,' said Lasker in *Schachwart* 1913. But, my dear reader, this conception is self-evident to me, as it is to anyone familiar with my system. In this connection I will simply point out what great practical chances a knowledge of my system can give: ideas fall into one's lap without effort, the journey is comfortable – for we know the landscape. Here an 'outpost' beckons, there the absolute 7th rank is in bloom, and here a 'protected' pawn smiles at us and wishes us a pleasant journey…

There followed **55…♝d3 56.♜e7** Of course. **56…♝b5** (Diagram 87):

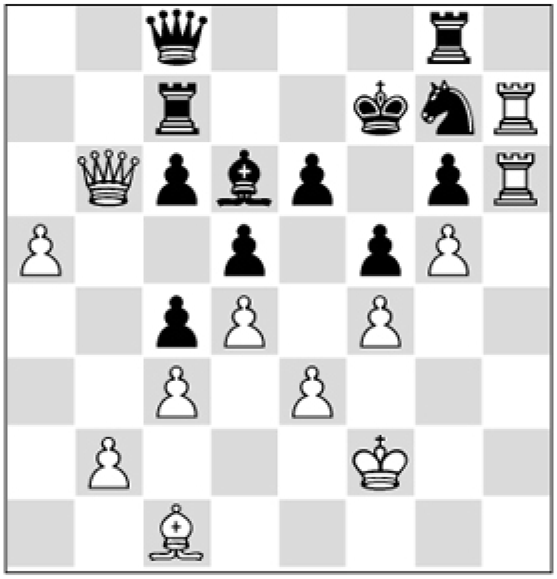
87



57.♚f4 White avoids 57.♖e8 ♗xe8 58.f8♕, although in this line he would take pleasure in getting a new queen – though after 58…♗c6+ and 59…♖xf8 the queen all of a sudden disappears, and with her, the pleasure! **57…♜h8 58.h7 ♝a4 59.♚e5 ♝b5 60.♝f6 e5 61.♝g7**, and Black resigned.

In Diagram 88:

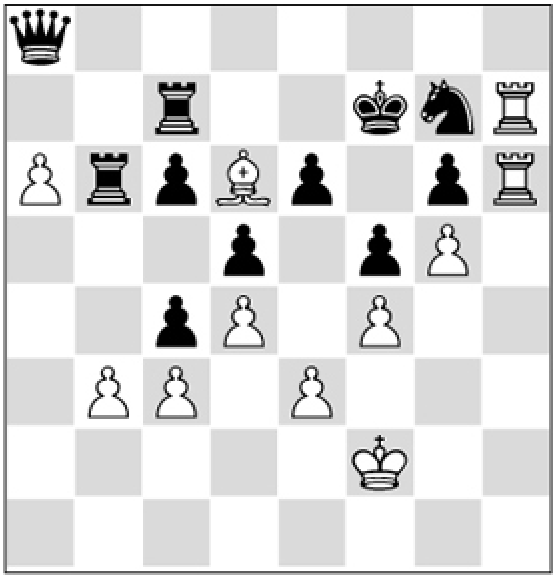
88



Nimzowitsch-Dr. Eliasstamm, Riga 1910, White playing without his b1-knight

There followed first of all **1.a6 ♕a8**, threatening 2…♖a7 and …♖xa6. White saves himself by means of the ‘following subtle trap,’ as the *Dünazeitung* called it, or by a combination based on a deep knowledge of the terrain (7th rank!), as we would say it. The game continued **2.b3 ♖b8** Better to be sure was 2…♖a7, and now there followed the queen sacrifice **3.♗a3!! ♖xb6 4.♗xd6**

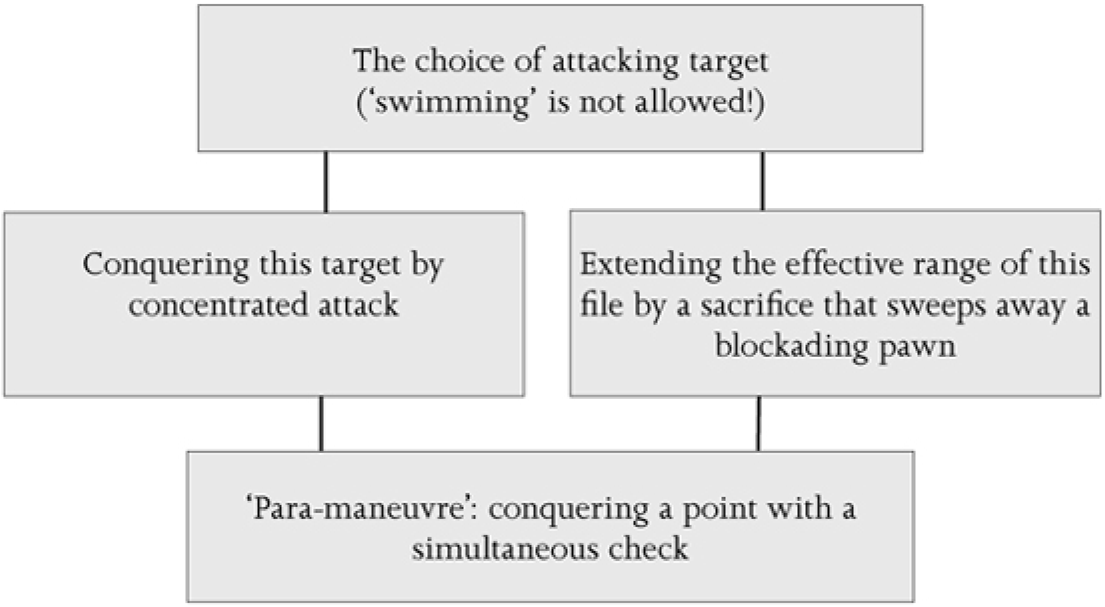
89



4…♖c8 5.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 6.♗e5+ ♔(any) and the rook gives perpetual check on h8 and h7.

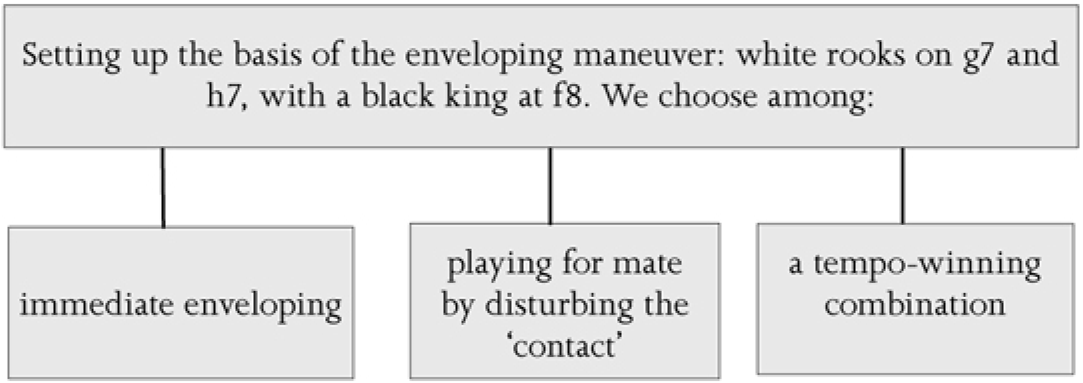
It is worth emphasizing that after the queen sacrifice White had a draw in any event. For example, 4…♕xa6 5.♗e5 ♔e8 6.♖h8+ ♔d7 7.♖6h7 ♕a2+ (to leave the a6-square open) 8.♔g3 c5 9.♖xg7+ ♔c6 10.♖xc7+ ♔b5 11.♖xc5+ ♔a6 12.♖a8+, winning the queen; or 4…♕g8 5.♗xc7 ♖xa6 6.bxc4 and 7.♗e5, or 4…♕g8 5.♗xc7 cxb3 6.♗xb6 b2 7.♖xg7+ ♕xg7 (or 7…♖xg7) 8.♖h1, when White has the significantly better prospects in view of the strong a-pawn.

Schema for the 7th and 8th ranks


The choice of attacking target (‘swimming’ is not allowed!)
Conquering this target by concentrated attack
Extending the effective range of this file by a sacrifice that sweeps away a blockading pawn
‘Para-maneuvre’: conquering a point with a simultaneous check

Schema for the five special cases

1. The absolute 7th rank and the passed pawn.
2. Perpetual check by the doubled rooks (correct use of the watchman).
3. Drawing mechanism with rook and knight.
4. More complex driving and marauding moves.
5. Enveloping move from the corner, from the 7th rank to the 8th, initiated by:


Setting up the basis of the enveloping maneuver: white rooks on g7 and h7, with a black king at f8. We choose among:
immediate enveloping
playing for mate by disturbing the ‘contact’
a tempo-winning combination

Illustrative games to the first three chapters

It is difficult to decide on a selection of illustrative games, for the number of well-played games is quite large. But at the same time it is easy to do this, for when it comes down to it every game is in some way characteristic of the System, since play along an open file or on the seventh rank is found in nearly every game.

Examining a chess game from the perspective of our scheme is something that no one can refuse to consider, and at the same time it is something we can always adduce for the benefit of our readers. So let us not worry ourselves about the game selection and proceed briskly to the work!

Game 1

Aron Nimzowitsch
Semyon Alapin
Vilnius 1912
French Defense

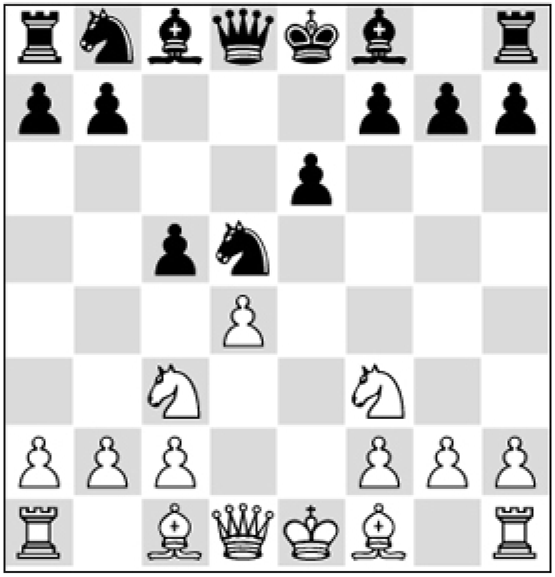
Illustrating the consequences of a pawn grab in the opening.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.exd5 ♘xd5

Giving up the center.

5.♘f3 c5

90



To ‘kill’ the pawn (see Chapter 1, Section 6a, ‘The Surrender of the Center’). Restraint might have been achieved by, say, …♗e7, …0-0,

…b7-b6, and …♗g7.

6.♞xd5 ♛xd5 7.♝e3

It was to be able to play this move, combining development and attack (threatening to win a pawn with 8.dxc5), that White traded on d5. (See Section 4, above.)

7…cxd4

The disappearance of a tempo means a loss of time.

8.♞xd4 a6 9.♝e2 ♛xg2

Making off with a pawn. The consequences are grievous for Black.

10.♝f3 ♛g6 11.♛d2 e5

The crisis. Black wants to be rid of the annoying d4-knight so that he can to some extent catch up with his development by …♘c6.

12.0-0-0! exd4 13.♝xd4

White's advantage in development is now very great.

13…♞c6 14.♝f6

Traveling by express train. Any other bishop move could have been answered by a developing move on the part of his opponent, whereas now there is no time for this. Black has to capture.

14…♛xf6 15.♜he1+

Playing on the d- and e-files at the same time. There is great danger of a breakthrough.

15…♝e7

Or 15…♗e6 16.♕d7#.

16.♝xc6+ ♝d7

Or 16…bxc6 17.♕d8#.

17.♛xd7+ ♚f8 18.♛d8+ ♝xd8 19.♜e8#

Game 2

Richard Teichmann

Aron Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1911

Philidor Defense

White obtains a free, mobile pawn center pawn at e4; Black restrains it with the help of resources offered him on the e-file (the outpost at e5).

He succeeds quite properly in killing the ‘criminal’ (Chapter 1, Section 6a), but then collapses.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7

This makes his own development more difficult, but it holds the center. To call the move ‘ugly’ would in any event be an… aberration of taste.

5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♕e2 c6

By which Black, all the same, establishes a sort of pawn majority in the center, though it is true that for the time being White is still at the helm.

8.a4

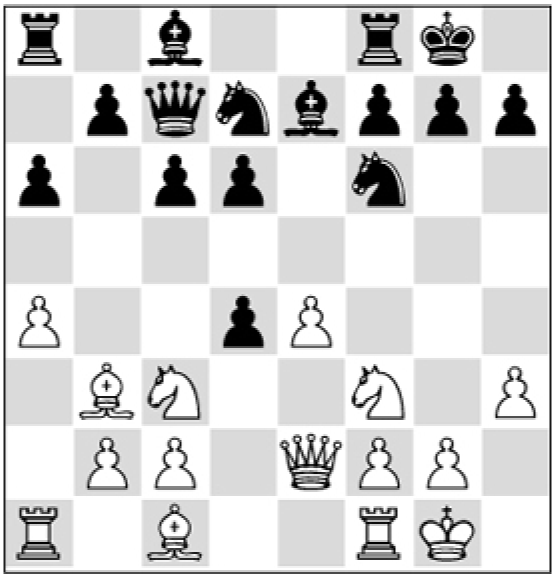
The closed character of the game admits of pawn moves in the opening phase.

8…♕c7 9.♗b3 a6

In order potentially to be able to advance the c-pawn.

10.h3 exd4

91



The problem of the center must not be regarded as of little consequence. Was happiness not happiness at all merely because it lasted for only a short time? One cannot always be happy.

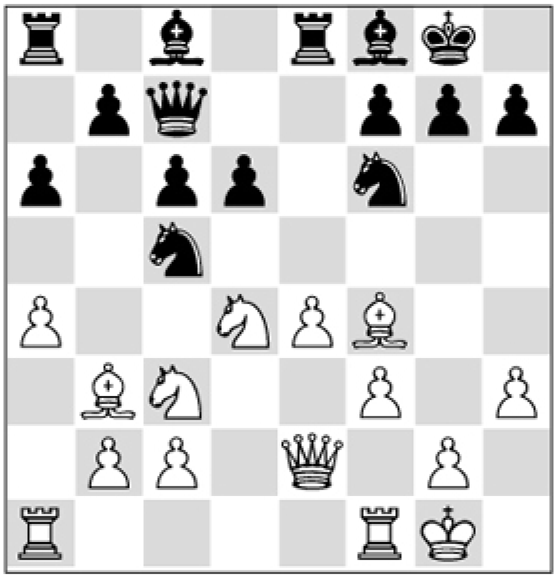
11.♘xd4 ♖e8

A strategy of restraint, directed against e4 (cf. Diagram 34).

12.♗f4 ♗f8 13.f3 ♘c5

The attentive student will have expected the occupation of the outpost by 13…♘e5. But first, Black wants to exchange to get some air, a recommendable stratagem in cramped positions.

92



14.♗a2 ♘e6! 15.♗xe6 ♗xe6 16.♕d2 ♖ad8 17.♖fe1 ♗c8 18.♖ad1 ♘d7!

Now, after a harmoniously conducted development (although for harmony there was to be sure little room left over with such a lack of terrain), Black occupies the advanced post.

19.♘f5 ♘e5

Commanding the field; a large radius of attack. The brash expulsion of the knight by f3-f4 would weaken the e4-pawn.

20.♘d4 f6

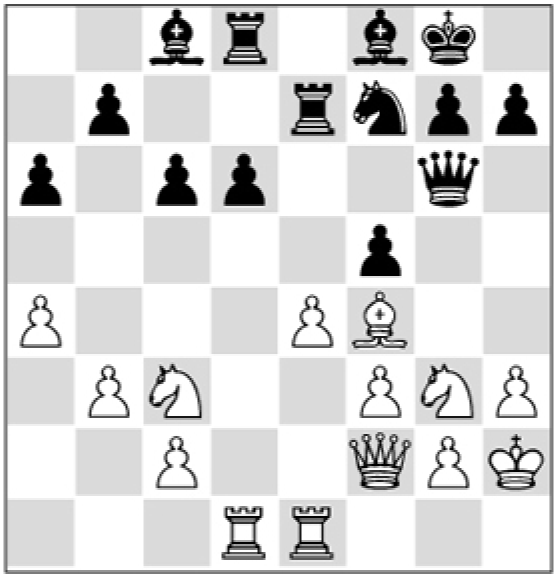
Please note the increasing paralysis of the e-pawn.

21.♔h1 ♕f7 22.♕f2 ♕g6 23.b3 ♘f7

And now …f6-f5 is prepared for. The student may perhaps inquire what the knight has accomplished at e5. Quite enough, actually, for White was unable to undertake anything.

24.♔h2 ♖e7 25.♘de2 f5 26.♘g3

93



26…fxe4

Overhasty. Correct, first, was 26…♖de8; e.g., 27.exf5 ♗xf5 28.♘xf5 ♕xf5 29.♗g3 ♖xe1 30.♖xe1 ♖xe1 31.♕xe1 ♕xc2.

27.♘cxe4

After 27.fxe4 the isolated pawn would be a bad weakness.

27…d5 28.♘c5 ♜de8 29.♘d3 ♜xe1

Black has now reached a level game. 29…♘d6 would surrender e5 (30.♗e5).

30.♜xe1 ♜xe1 31.♛xe1 ♛e6 32.♛xe6 ♝xe6 33.♝e3

This good move restrains Black’s majority on the queenside. Now Black should have contented himself with a draw; but he wanted more and lost the game as follows:

33…♝d6 34.f4 ♚f8 35.♚g1 g6 36.♚f2 h5 37.♘c5 ♝c8 38.a5 ♘h6 39.b4 ♚f7 40.c3 ♘g8

40…♘f5 would have drawn.

41.♚f3 ♘f6 42.♝d4 ♝xc5 43.♝xc5 ♝e6 44.♝d4 ♘e4 45.♘e2!

Not 45.♘xe4 dxe4+ 46.♔xe4 because of 46…♗d5+ followed by 47…♗xg2.

45…♝f5

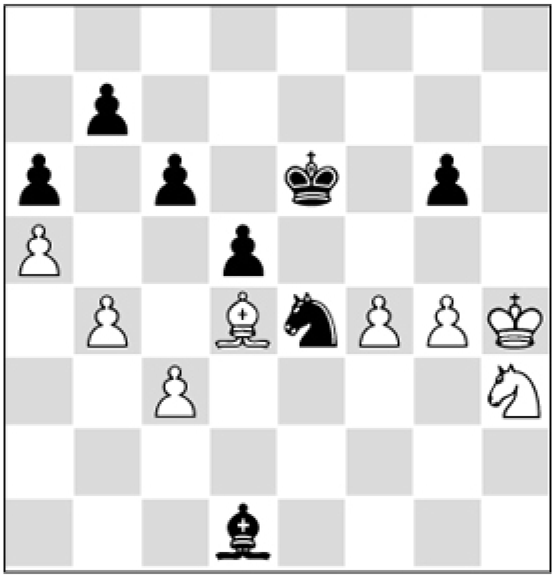
It’s no use, Black simply has a pawn less. His majority is restrained, while White’s is mobile.

46.g4 hxg4+ 47.hxg4 ♘d2+

It would have been much better to keep the bishop at home, therefore 47…♗d7.

48.♚g3 ♝c2 49.♞g1 ♚e6 50.♚h4 ♝d1 51.♞h3 ♞e4

94



52.f5+!

Artfully turning his majority to account!

52…gxf5

On 52…♔f7, 53.fxg6+ ♔xg6 54.♘f4+ would have been unpleasant.

53.♞f4+ ♚f7 54.g5! ♝g4 55.g6+ ♚e7 56.g7 ♚f7 57.♞g6 c5 58.bxc5

Black resigned.

Game 3

Louis van Vliet

Eugene Znosko-Borovsky

Ostend 1907

Queen’s Pawn Game

An excellent example of play along the open file. Znosko gets a superior position right at the outset on that file, and without the requisite forward outpost forces his way into the foundation of the enemy position.

1.d4 d5 2.e3 c5 3.c3 e6 4.♝d3 ♞c6 5.f4

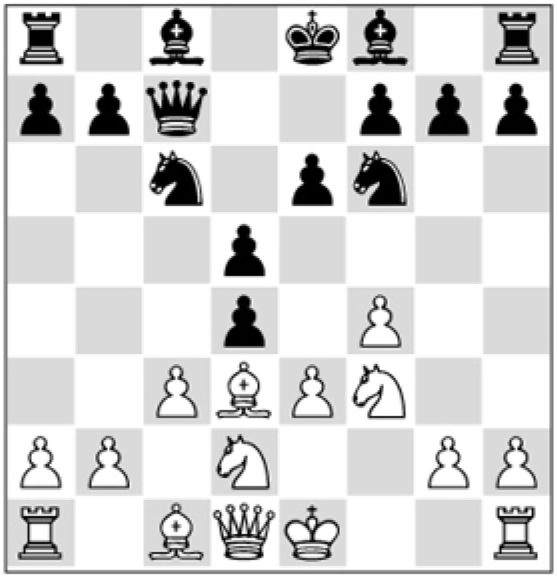
The Reversed Stonewall, a very closed opening.

5…♞f6 6.♞d2 ♛c7 7.♞gf3

Overlooking the threat involved in …♕c7. Here, 7.♘h3 followed by ♕f3 would have been the better deployment.

7…cxd4!

95

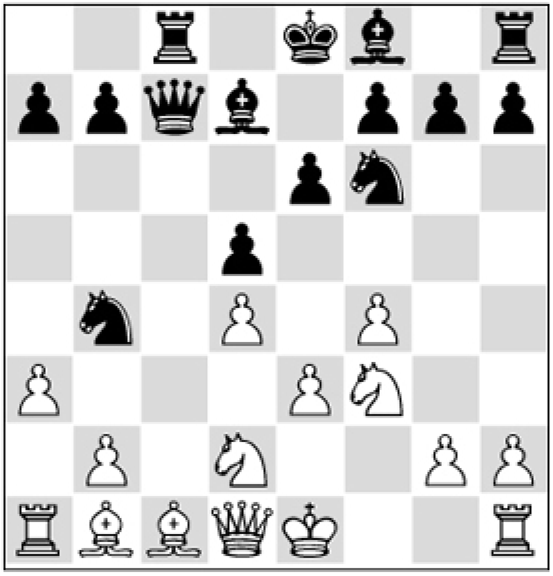


8.cxd4

As a rule, the right move here positionally would be 8.exd4 (White would then have the e-file with an outpost point at e5, while the pawn at c3 would close the opponent’s c-file; see Section 4 of Chapter 2), but here this move would cost a pawn: 8.exd4 ♕xf4. Nevertheless, it was preferable to the text move; viz.: 8.exd4 ♕xf4 9.♘c4! ♕c7 (9…♕g4 10.♘e3!) 10.♘ce5 ♗d6 11.♕e2 and White has a not ill-protected outpost on the king file, which Black would not be able to unsettle even by 11…♗xe5 12.dxe5 ♘d7 13.♗f4 f6?, inasmuch as 14.exf6! ♕xf4 15.fxg7 ♖g8 16.♕xe6+ would win for White. So long as the king file, with the outpost at e5, or its full equivalent, a pawn at e5 (after the pawn recaptures), remains in White’s possession, he would have an excellent position despite the pawn minus.

8…♘b4 9.♗b1 ♗d7 10.a3 ♖c8!

96



Only by this subtle rook move does the otherwise novice-like knight maneuver acquire meaning.

11.0-0 ♗b5 12.♖e1 ♘c2 13.♗xc2 ♕xc2 14.♕xc2 ♖xc2

The 7th rank, backed by the bishop’s diagonal b5-f1 and the point e4 for the knight.

15.h3 ♗d6 16.♘b1 ♘e4

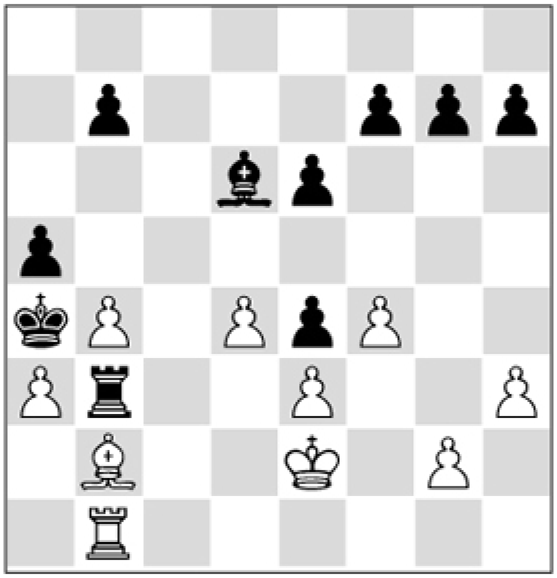
This is not an outpost in our sense (the open file behind it is lacking), but it is a good substitute.

17.♘fd2 ♗d3 18.♘xe4 ♗xe4

18…dxe4, with the bishop established at d3, also would have been very nice… and would give us the opportunity to emphasize the fact that the strength of a file or diagonal always finds its terse and incisive expression in a protected point – as though, perhaps, the abstract concept ‘file’ or ‘diagonal’ had been transformed into material (for, from my point of view, a protected point is ‘material’).

19.♘d2 ♔d7 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♖b1 ♖hc8 22.b4 ♖8c3 23.♔f1 ♔c6! 24.♗b2 ♖b3 25.♖e2 ♖xe2 26.♔xe2 ♔b5 27.♔d2 ♔a4 28.♔e2 a5

97



The decisive breakthrough. The position of Black’s rook, constraining the white e-pawn and keeping it under threat, was also too strong to be withstood. The rest is easy to understand.

29.♔f2 axb4 30.axb4 ♔xb4 31.♔e2 ♔b5 32.♔d2 ♗a3 33.♔c2 ♖xb2+ 34.♖xb2+ ♗xb2 35.♔xb2 ♔c4 36.♔c2 b5

White resigned.

Game 4

Francis Joseph Lee
Aron Nimzowitsch
Ostend 1907
Queen’s Pawn Game

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘bd2 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.c3 ♗e7 6.♗c4 0-0 7.0-0 exd4 8.cxd4 d5

We have already discussed the opening moves in Chapter 1, Section 6a.

9.♗d3 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 ♘f6

This was our exchange and consequent win of tempo.

12.♗d3 ♘d5

Play on the d-file against d4.

13.a3 ♗f6 14.♕c2 h6 15.♗d2 ♗e6 16.♖ae1 c6 17.♗e3 ♕b6 18.h3 ♖ad8 19.♖c1 ♖d7

A quiet build-up. The attacking target d4 is immobile, so there’s no need to get excited.

20.♜fe1 ♜fd8 21.♛e2 ♛c7 22.♝b1 ♞e7

With his work done (for the knight has been working), a change of air does him well: the knight is in pursuit of the f5-square.

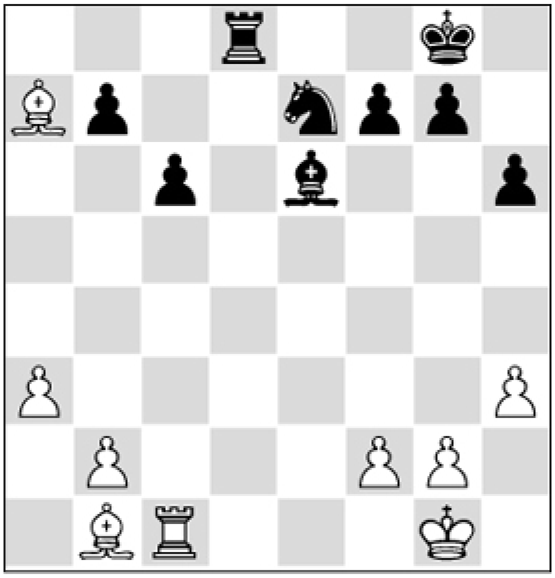
23.♞e5 ♝xe5 24.dxe5 ♛xe5 25.♝xa7 ♛xe2 26.♜xe2 ♜d1+

Black now penetrates into the enemy position via the d-file.

27.♜e1 ♜xc1 28.♜xc1

Now begins the play along the 7th rank (here, the 2nd rank):

98



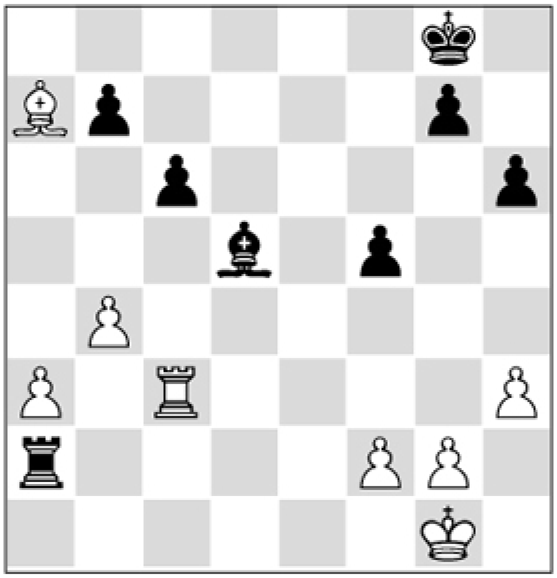
28…♜d2 29.b4 ♞d5 30.♝e4 ♞f6 31.♝c2 ♞d5 32.♝e4 ♜a2!

Allowing White to bring about bishops of opposite colors.

33.♝xd5 ♝xd5 34.♜c3 f5!

All played in accordance with my system.

99



Black seeks a target on the 7th rank – nothing more can be done against a3 – so the second player looks to expose the pawn on g2. This will be effected by a cohesive advance of the kingside forces.

35.♚h2 ♚f7 36.♝c5 g5 37.♜d3 b5 38.♝d4 ♝e4 39.♜c3 ♝d5 40.♝c5 ♚g6 41.♜d3 h5 42.♝b6 f4 43.♝d4 ♚f5 44.f3

White stood very poorly here; the threat was 44…g4 followed by 45…g4-g3+ 46.fxg3 ♖xg2+.

44…g4 45.hxg4+ hxg4 46.♚g1 ♜e2

The 8th rank (here the 1st rank) is also weak (…g4-g3 is threatened) and White does not have an abundance of moves, either.

47.fxg4+ ♚e4 48.♜d1 ♝b3 49.♜f1 ♚xd4 50.♜xf4+ ♜e4 51.♜f6 ♝d5 52.♜g6 ♜e2 53.♚h2 ♜xg2+ 54.♚h3 ♜a2

0-1

Game 5

Dr. Von Haken
Ernst Giese
Riga 1913
French Defense

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♞f3 ♝d6 5.♝d3 ♞f6 6.h3 0-0 7.0-0 h6

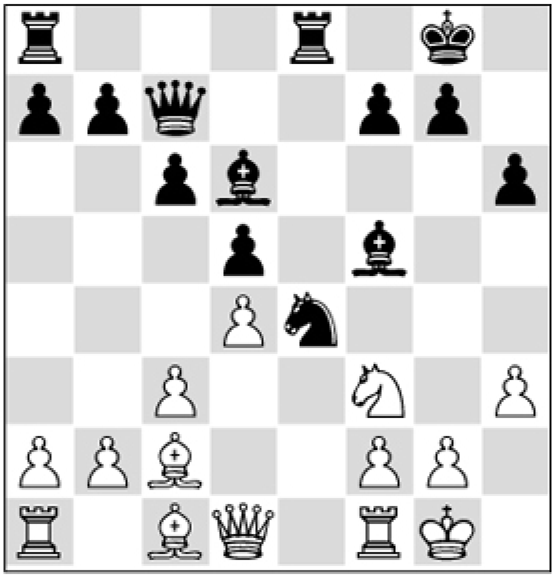
In the Exchange Variation of the French Defense with the knights posted at f3 and f6, the pinning moves ♗g5 and …♗g4 furnish one of the leading motifs for both players. Here, however, this motif is ruled out by h2-h3 and …h7-h6, and we see and hear nothing but the e-file.

8.♘c3 c6 9.♘e2 ♖e8 10.♘g3 ♘e4

The outpost.

11.♘h5 ♘d7 12.c3 ♘df6 13.♘h2 ♕c7 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.♘f3 ♘e4 16.♗c2 ♗f5!

100



All the pieces are aiming at the strategic point; this is also called emphasizing one’s strength (here, the knight at e4).

17.♘h4 ♗h7 18.♗e3 g5 19.♘f3 f5 20.♖e1 ♖e7

The pressure along the file is strengthened move by move.

21.♘d2 f4 22.♘xe4 dxe4

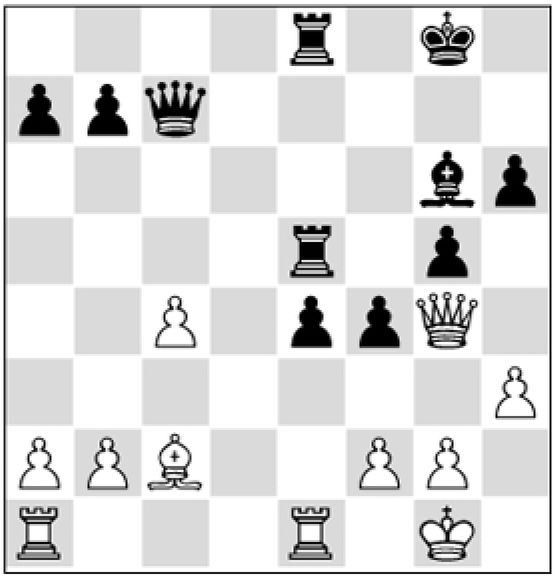
The outpost knight is now worthily replaced by a ‘half-passed’ pawn.

23.♗d2 ♖ae8 24.c4 c5 25.♗c3 ♗g6!

To be able to play …♔h7 and …e4-e3; a timely advance against the target at h3 is also threatened by …h6-h5 and …g5-g4.

26.♕g4 cxd4 27.♗xd4 ♗e5 28.♗xe5 ♖xe5

101



29.♛d1

If 29.♖ad1, then 29…e3 30.♗xg6 exf2+ 31.♔xf2 ♕c5+ 32.♔f1 ♕xc4+ 33.♔f2 ♕c5+ 34.♔f1 ♕b5+ 35.♔f2 ♕xb2+ 36.♔f1 ♕b5+ 37.♔f2 ♕b6+ 38.♔f1 ♕a6+ 39.♔f2 ♕xa2+ 40.♔f1 ♕a6+ 41.♔f2 ♕b6+ 42.♔f1 followed by the double exchange at e1 and …♕xg6. A fine illustration of the theme ‘winning a pawn with check.’ See also Chapter 3, Diagram 74.

29…♜d8 30.♛b1 ♜d2 31.♝xe4 ♛c5 32.♝d5+ ♚g7 33.♛c1 ♛xf2+ 34.♚h1 ♜exd5

0-1

This game provides a transparent, hence a good, illustration of the outpost theme.

Game 6

Siegbert Tarrasch
Johann Berger
Breslau 1889
Spanish

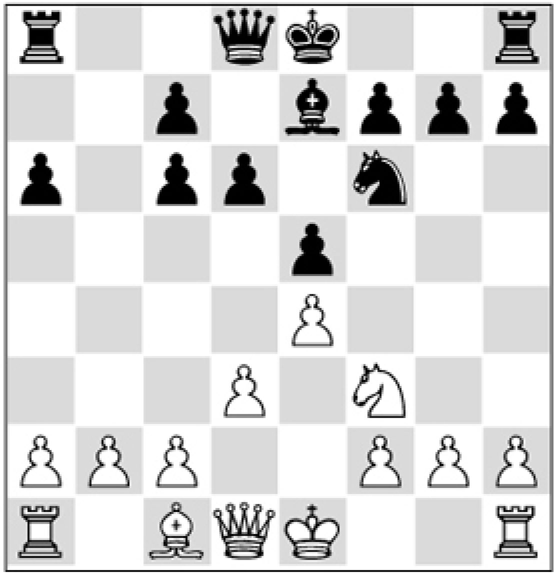
A game from the early days of chess science. After the opening moves

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝b5 a6 4.♝a4 ♞f6 5.♞c3 ♝b4 6.♞d5 ♝e7 7.d3 d6

Tarrasch, with

8.♞b4 ♝d7 9.♞xc6 ♝xc6 10.♝xc6+ bxc6

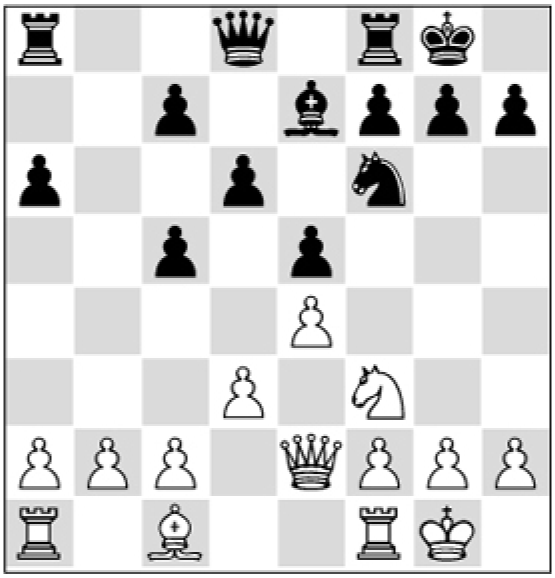
102



gives his opponent a doubled pawn – the weakness of which, however, must for the present be considered questionable. There followed:

11.0-0 0-0 12.♕e2 c5?

103



Today, this move would be considered bad: the weakness of the doubled pawn becomes evident when Black advances, but not when White advances (in the center). On the contrary, after d3-d4 e5xd4 the pawn on c6 would attack White's outpost on the d-file! (We can see how much easier thinking is made by the system.) Correct therefore was 12…♖e8 and …♗f8, awaiting events.

13.c3

To be able to play d3-d4 as quickly as possible, and at any price. Today we know that the central attack is not the only one that brings happiness. Correct was ♘d2-c4 followed by the planned b2-b4 or f2-f4, the center remaining inactive.

13…♘d7 14.d4 exd4 15.cxd4 ♗f6 16.♗e3 cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♖e8 18.♕c2 ♗xd4 19.♘xd4 ♘c5

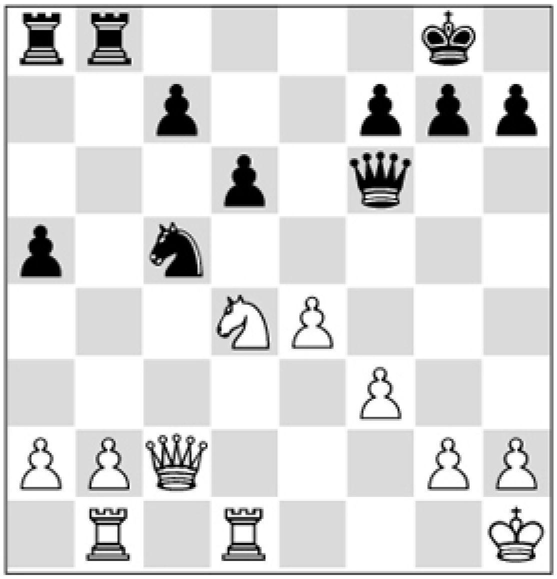
On this position of the knight the fate of the game now depends. If this knight is driven away, the c7-square may become weak.

20.f3 ♕f6 21.♖fd1 ♖eb8

White is in control of the d-file and the point d5. The e-file is without value for Black, partly because of the ‘protected’ e4-pawn but also in part because the rooks are engaged in stopping b2-b4.

22.♖ab1 a5 23.♔h1(!)

104



The idea of this subtle move is to permit the center to become a weapon of attack. For now, after 23.♔h1, White threatens 24.e5 ♕xe5 25.♘c6, which on the previous move would have failed to the check on e3. The king move has no positive value, since Black would have to play …♖b7 in any case, if only to double the rooks. We observe that Black is operating on the b-file against the advance (or the point) b2-b4.

23…♖b6

Not good, as White suddenly becomes strong on the d-file (the outpost at d5 now becomes occupied, with an attack against the rook at b6). More suitable, by contrast, would be 23…♖b7 (suggested by Steinitz) or even a passive continuation (23…h6, say). For example, 23…h6 24.e5 dxe5 25.♕xc5 exd4 26.♖xd4 a4 (Black’s b-file exerting pressure) 27.♖b4 ♕d6 with a comfortable equality. Or 23… ♖b7 24.♘e2 ♖ab8 25.♘c3 and now 25…a4, when the b-file makes itself felt.

24.♞e2 ♞e6 25.♞c3 ♜c6

It is understandable that Berger finds the move ♘d5 uncomfortable, but better was the orderly retreat 25…♕d8 26.♘d5 ♖b7, with …♖ab8 to follow.

26.♛a4 ♜c5 27.♞d5 ♛d8 28.♜bc1

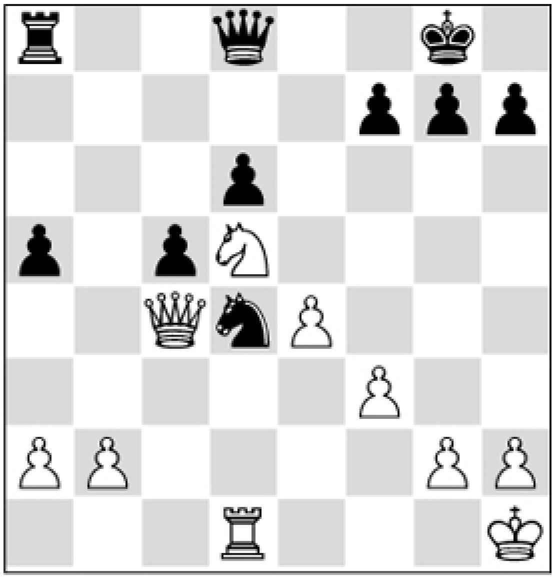
The white maneuver ♕a4 and ♖c1 is perfectly clear. White looks to take over the c-file (which is still being contested), in order at the right moment to play his trump card ♕c6.

28…♜xc1 29.♜xc1 c5

Repairing the c7-weakness. Yet Black was already unfavorably placed (as he had turned his back on the b-file).

30.♜d1 ♞d4 31.♛c4

105



White wants to trade off the black knight, perhaps by ♘e3-c2, then besiege the d-pawn to his heart's content. This attack must prove successful, for the protecting pieces can easily find themselves in uncomfortable positions (e.g., Black: rook at d7, queen at e7; White: rook at d5, queen at d3), when the e-pawn would attack the pinned d-pawn a third time, winning it.

For us it is of interest to notice how the white pieces look in the direction of d5 (31.♕c4!). What happens in practice is that the player in possession of such a point (such as d5 in this position) embarks on protracted tacking maneuvers with the aforementioned point serving as the base. That is to say, the pieces come and go in and out of d5, the poor d6-pawn is attacked, now in one way, now in another, and finally Black runs out of breath – that is, he cannot keep pace with this maneuvering. This is quite understandable, since he himself has no base from which to maneuver and is stuck in a cramped position.

It is true that this game does not show the sort of struggle we have just outlined; Black commits a mistake that diverts the game from the path of its logical development.

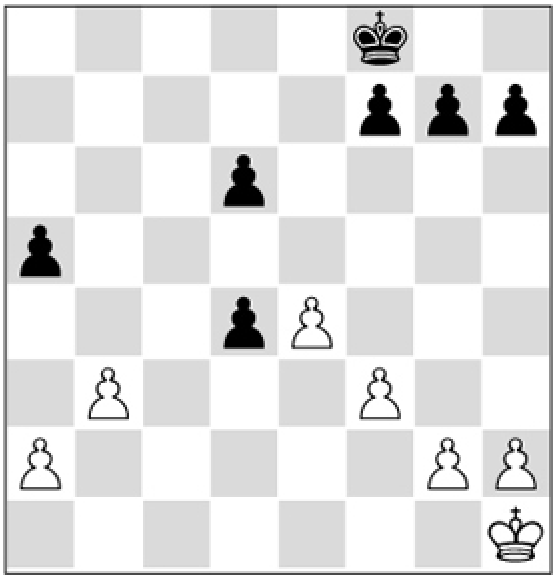
31...♖b8 32.b3 ♖c8? 33.♖xd4 cxd4 34.♘e7+

Not 34.♕xc8? ♕xc8 35.♘e7+, when the d-pawn goes on to queen.

34...♕xe7 35.♕xc8+ ♕f8 36.♕xf8+ ♔xf8

And White won the pawn ending with his 'distant' passed pawn.

106



We will make use of this ending (Chapter 4, Diagram 184) as an illustration of ‘passed pawns’ and ask that our benevolent reader be patient.

The next game is one of heavy caliber.

Game 7

Abram Rabinovich
Aron Nimzowitsch
Baden-Baden 1925
Queen’s Indian Defense

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b7 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 ♗e7 7.e3 d6 8.♗d3 ♘bd7

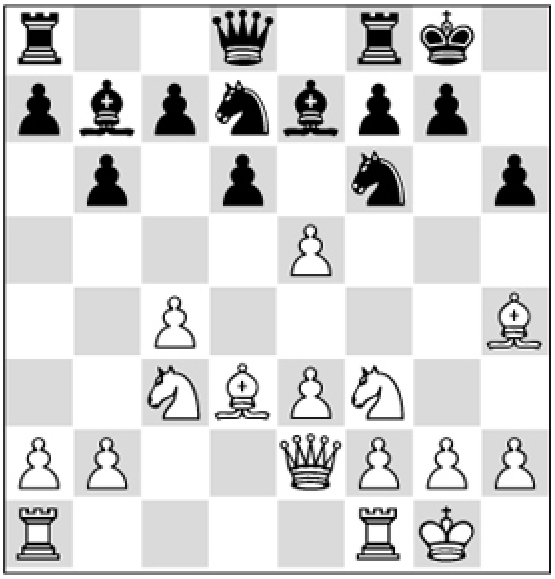
Black has a solid but rather cramped game; as a rule such a game can be opened up only slowly.

9.0-0 0-0 10.♕e2 e5

‘Slower,’ but more in the style of the opening, was 10…♘h5.

11.dxe5

107



11…♗xf3!

Not 11…♘xe5 12.♘xe5 dxe5 13.♖d1, with pressure on the d-file.

12.gxf3 ♘xe5 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♗e4 ♖b8

The white d-file and the outpost at d5 will be able to compel the loosening …c7-c6, that much is certain. True, the black pawn at d6 will not be difficult to defend, but it will stand on the same color as White's bishop. But what will happen on the g-file? We shall soon see.

15.♖ad1 ♘d7 16.♘d5 ♘c5 17.♗b1 a5

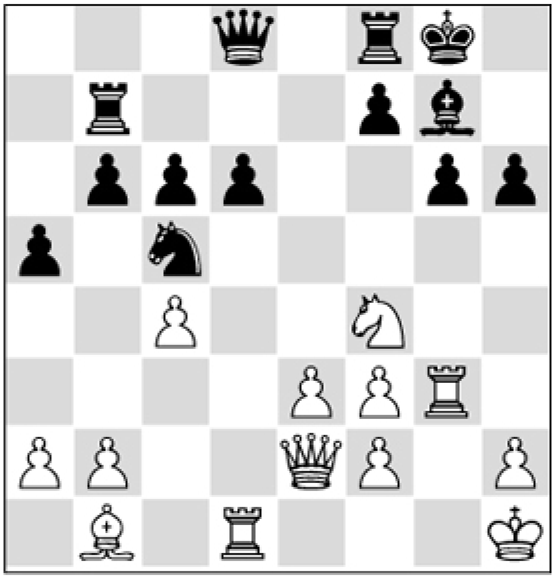
Not an outpost, but still strong. The student should practice (especially) how to establish knights so that they cannot be driven away.

18.♔h1 g6

This loosening of his position would be forced by White's ♕c2 in any case.

19.♖g1 ♗g7 20.♖g3 c6 21.♘f4 ♖b7!

108



The situation on the g-file may be regarded as clarified – it is evident that the threat of a sacrifice exists on g6 (i.e., the 'revolutionary' attack). The gradual undermining operation with h2-h4-h5, in contrast, is difficult to carry out.

22.♕c2 ♕f6 23.b3

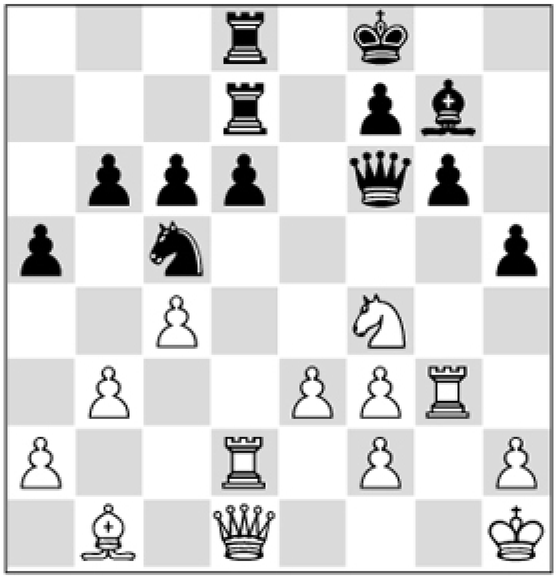
The combinational attempt here is 23.♘h5 ♕xb2 24.♖xg6 (see the previous note) 24…fxg6 25.♕xg6. But the attack could hardly have broken through.

23…♖e8 24.♘e2

To bring the knight to d4. The dilemma for White consists in the availability of two open files, d and g, and he cannot quite decide which to use; as a result of this indecision his game goes downhill.

24…♖d7 25.♖d2 ♖ed8 26.♘f4 ♔f8 27.♕d1 h5!!

109



Not only to facilitate …♗h6 but also because the h-pawn has a great role to play.

28.♕g1 ♗h6 29.♘e2 d5

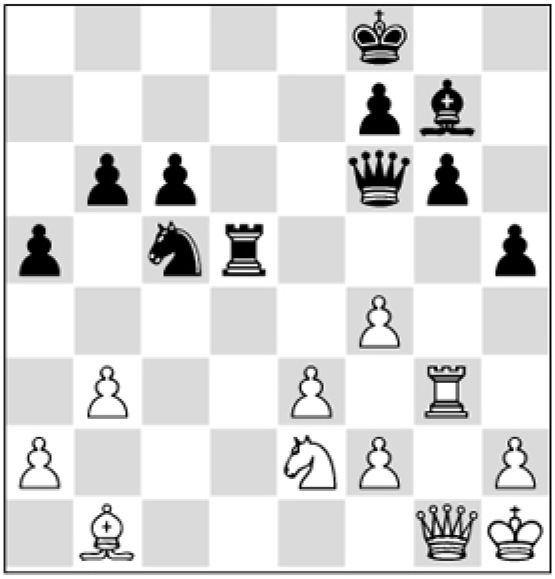
Ridding himself of the weakness at d6 and soon getting control of the d-file.

30.cxd5 ♖xd5 31.♖xd5 ♖xd5 32.f4

On 32.♘d4 there would follow 32…♗f4; e.g., 33.exf4 ♕xd4 34.f5 h4! 35.♖g4 ♕c3, when the f3-pawn is hard to defend.

32…♗g7

110



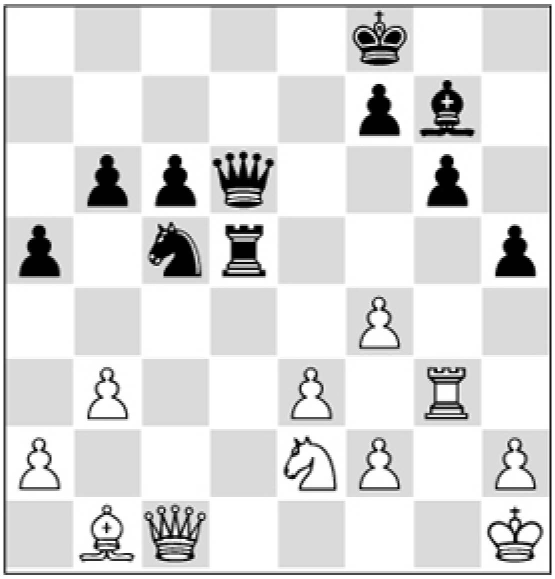
This renunciation of the h6-f4 diagonal, a difficult decision to make, becomes comparatively easy for one who knows that there will be obstacles in the way (here, a potential knight placement at d4) that will have to be bombarded. Hence I didn’t care for 32…♖d2 (instead of 32…♗g7) because of the reply 33.♘d4 ♗xf4 34.♖f3.

33.♕c1

Here (at last!) I expected the sacrifice on g6 and had prepared for it a real problem in reply, namely, 33.♗xg6 h4! 34.♖g4 fxg6 35.♖xg6 ♕f5 36.♖xg7 ♕e4+ 37.♕g2 (forced) ♖d1+ 38.♘g1, and now the point 38…h3!! 39.♕xe4 ♘xe4, with mate threatened at f2.

33…♕d6

111



What follows now is a textbook (I mean, my textbook) exploitation of the d-file, though it is embellished with a charming point. Without possession of my theoretical guidelines I should never have come upon this concluding maneuver. In what follows I want to illustrate the ‘pleasure’ and ‘displeasure’ experienced with each move, so that the reader may follow the course of the game in the right way.

34.♗c2 ♘e4 35.♖g2 h4 36.♘g1

I was happy to be rid of this knight, and played

36…♘c3

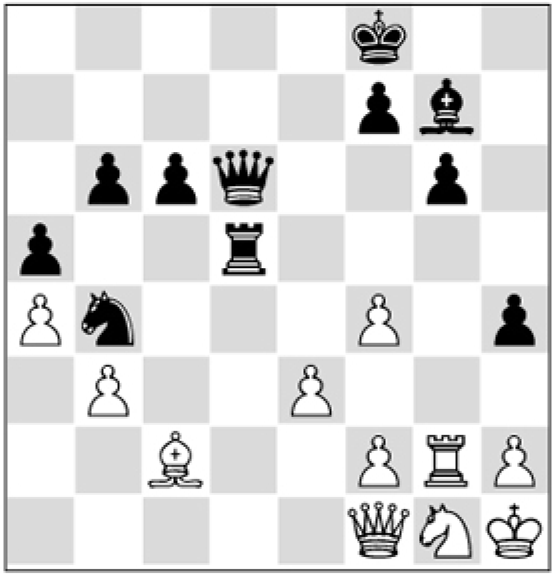
This knight maneuver makes possible the penetration into the base of the enemy position (here, the 1st and 2nd ranks).

37.a4

37.a3? ♘a2, winning the a3-pawn.

37…♘a2 38.♕f1 ♘b4

112



Here I had the unpleasant feeling that I had let the bishop out, letting it have room to maneuver…

39.♗e4 ♖d1

My first thought was, what a pity! Now the queen will also find a way into the open. But then I saw the specter of checkmate looming up, the same one with which I was familiar ever since the 33rd move.

40.♕c4 f5! 41.♗f3 h3! 42.♖g3 ♝d3! 43.♕c2 ♜c1

Here I rejoiced in the queen's involuntary return home.

44.♕e2 ♜b1

White resigned, as the enveloping move …♖b2 will be to deadly effect.

The impression we get from all this is that the system supported the combinational play most effectively.

And finally, a short game that has become widely known under the title 'The Immortal Zugzwang Game'. It is of interest here in so far as the threat of establishing an outpost is nothing more than a threat, and appears only as a mere spectre – and yet its effect is enormous.

Game 8

Friedrich Sämisch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1923
Queen’s Indian Defense

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗e7 6.♘c3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.♘e5 c6

Securing his position.

9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♗f4 a6!

Covering the outpost point c4, that is, with …a7-a6 and …b7-b5.

11.♖c1 b5 12.♕b3 ♘c6

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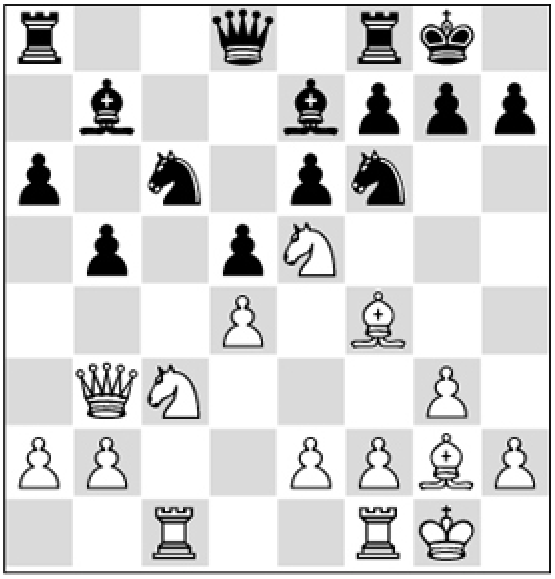

The spectre! With silent steps it presses on to c4.

13.♘xc6

Sämisch forgoes two tempi (the exchange of the tempo-devouring ♘e5 for a knight on c6 that is almost undeveloped) merely to be rid of the ghost.

13…♗xc6 14.h3 ♕d7 15.♔h2 ♘h5

I could have offered up yet another ghost with 15…♕b7 followed by …♘d7-b6-c4, but I wanted to turn my attention to the kingside.

16.♗d2 f5! 17.♕d1 b4! 18.♘b1 ♗b5 19.♖g1 ♗d6 20.e4

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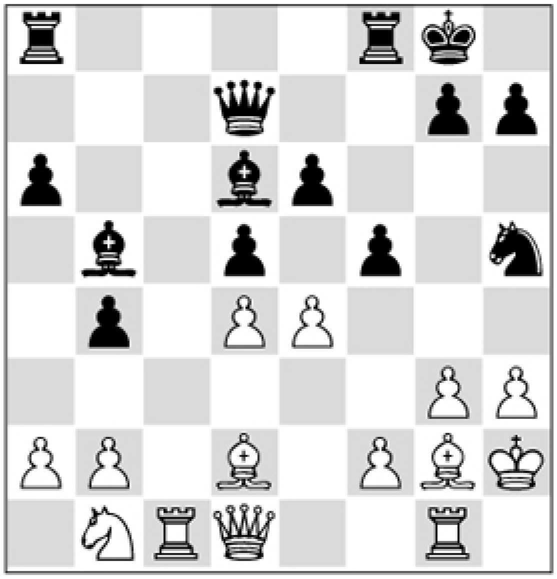

20…fxe4!

This otherwise quite surprisingly effective sacrifice is indicated by sober calculation: two pawns and the 7th rank and an enemy queenside that cannot be disentangled – all this at the cost of a mere piece!

21.♕xh5 ♜xf2 22.♕g5 ♜af8 23.♔h1 ♜8f5 24.♕e3 ♝d3 25.♖ce1 h6!!

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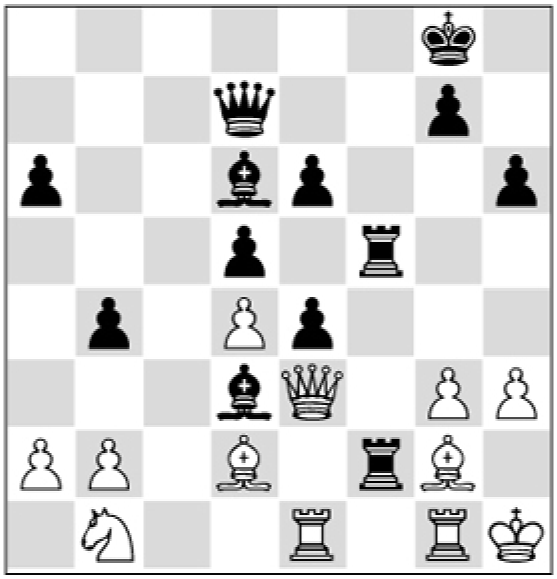

A brilliant move that announces zugzwang. White no longer has a move. If, e.g., 26.♔h2 or 26.g4, 26…♜5f3 follows. Black now makes waiting moves with his king, and White has no choice but to throw himself on his sword. White resigned.

The next few chapters will discuss the passed pawn and the endgame, but before we embark on these we should like to briefly examine a few games in which our esteemed open file succeeds in winning honors in a surprising way.

Game 9

Aron Nimzowitsch
Axel Pritzel
Copenhagen 1922
King's Indian Defense

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♝g7 3.♞c3 d6 4.♝e3 ♞f6 5.♝e2 0-0 6.♛d2

To trade off the g7-bishop with ♗h6.

6…e5 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.0-0-0

The plan chosen by White is captivating in its simplicity of means. By allowing the exchange of queens he gets something of an advantage on the d-file.

8…♛xd2+ 9.♜xd2

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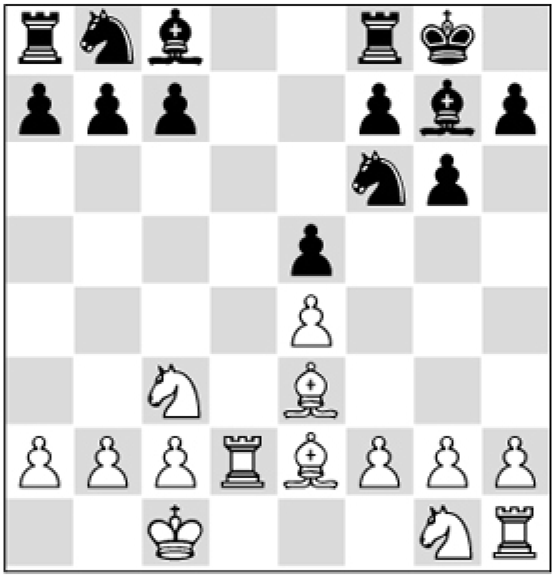

9…c6?

Such a weakening of an important point (d6) should be avoided if at all possible, and in fact a piece soon becomes established on this square. The important thing for the student is the fact that before …c7-c6 was played the d-file was merely 'under pressure', whereas now it is obviously weakened. Black might therefore have considered omitting this move and playing, for example, 9…♘c6. The sequel might be 10.h3 (to be able to play ♘f3 without having to face …♘g4) 10…♘d4!? 11.♘f3! (but not 11.♗xd4 exd4 12.♖xd4 ♘g4!) ♘xe2+ (or 11…♘xf3 12.♗xf3) 12.♖ or ♗xe2, when White stands better.

Still, 9…♘c6 was the correct move, only after 10.h3 Black had to follow up with 10…♗e6; e.g., 11.♘f3 h6 12.♖hd1 a6:

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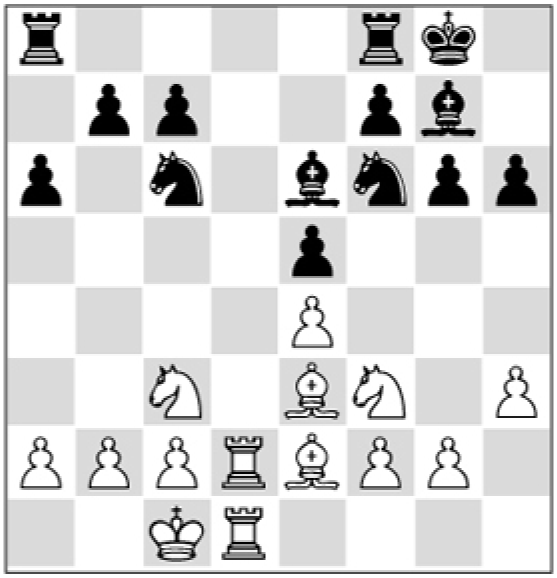

White unquestionably has control of the d-file, but since neither a penetration into the 7th rank nor the establishment of an outpost on d5 lies within the realm of possibility, it seems that the value of the file is of a problematical nature. White's central pawn at e4, in particular, is in need of protection, and this circumstance has a not inconsiderable crippling effect on his game. Black can consider either the immediate …♖fd8 (with the idea ♖xd8 ♖xd8; ♖xd8 ♘xd8; ♘xe5 ♘xe4; this line must, however, be prefaced by …♔h7 or …g6-g5, safeguarding the h6-pawn against the bishop at e3, otherwise after the double exchange of rooks and ♘xe5 ♘xe4 there is the reply ♘xe4 ♗xe5; ♗xh6) or the slower maneuver …♖fc8 followed by …♔f8-e8 and finally the opposition to the rooks on the file of contention with …♖d8. This last line of play is significant in demonstrating White's minor degree of activity along the d-file.

10.a4

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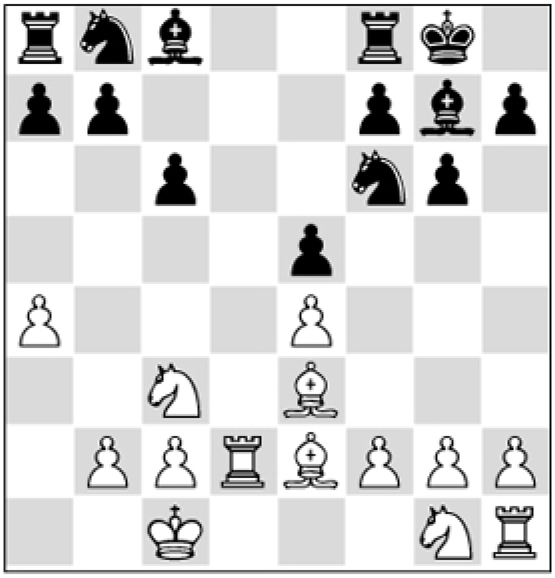

Apparently compromising, but in reality well motivated. For in the first place, …b7-b5, which would mean an indirect and therefore unwelcome attack against e4, must be prevented, and secondly, Black’s queenside is to be besieged.

We feel justified in undertaking this ambitious plan of encirclement, since after the move 9…c6 it stands to reason that White’s incontestable positional advantage along the central file should have a vitalizing effect on the wings as well. We formulate this idea as follows: Superiority in the center warrants a thrust on the flank.

10…♘g4 11.♗xg4 ♗xg4 12.♘ge2

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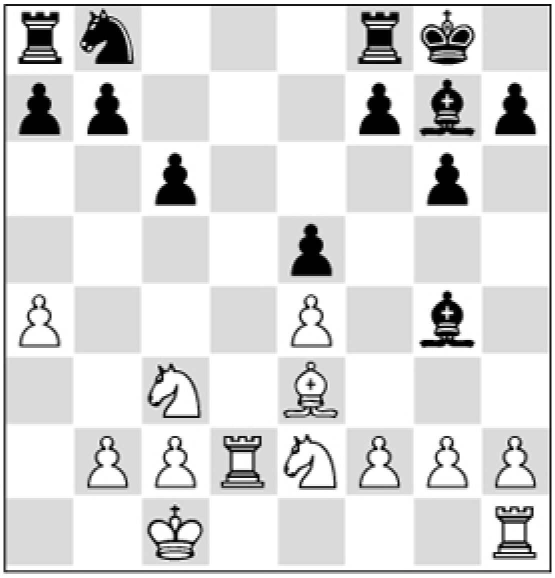

12…♘d7

In unusual situations, ordinary moves, it seems, are seldom appropriate. Correct here was the developing 12…♘a6 followed by …♖fe8 and …♗f8; the weakness at d6 would be covered and the position would be perfectly tenable.

13.♖hd1 ♘b6 14.b3 ♗f6 15.f3 ♗e6 16.a5 ♘c8 17.♘a4

It is now evident that the development spoken of earlier, 12…♘a6, would have been less time-wasting than the actually played maneuver …♘d7-b6-c8.

White now has a strong position on the far queenside and he is threatening to get a bind on the enemy position with 18.♘c5.

We now see that 10.a4! possessed not a little attacking value.

17…b6!

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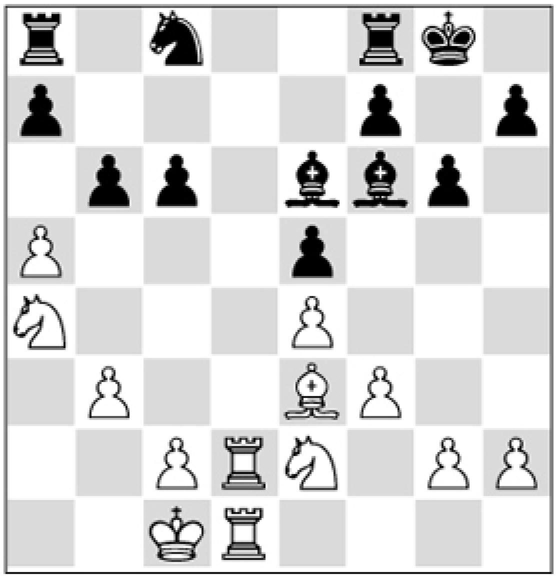

An excellent parry. On 18.axb6 axb6 19.♘xb6 ♘xb6 20.♗xb6 Black would of course play 20…♗g5.

18.♖d3!

The ‘restricted’ advance, which in this instance is shown in a form that is especially flexible, in that the rook is brought from the d-file to the c-file and from there to the a-file.

18…bxa5

Poor. Correct was 18…♖b8. Black’s position still had life in it; I absolutely believe, in company with Dr. Lasker, in the power of defense.

19.♖c3 ♘e7 20.♖c5 ♖fb8 21.♘ec3

The a-pawn isn’t going anywhere.

21…a6 22.♖xa5 ♔g7 23.♘b6 ♖a7 24.♘ca4

The one knight makes room for the other.

24…♖ab7 25.♖xa6 ♘c8 26.♘xc8 ♖xc8 27.♘c5 ♖bc7 28.♖d6

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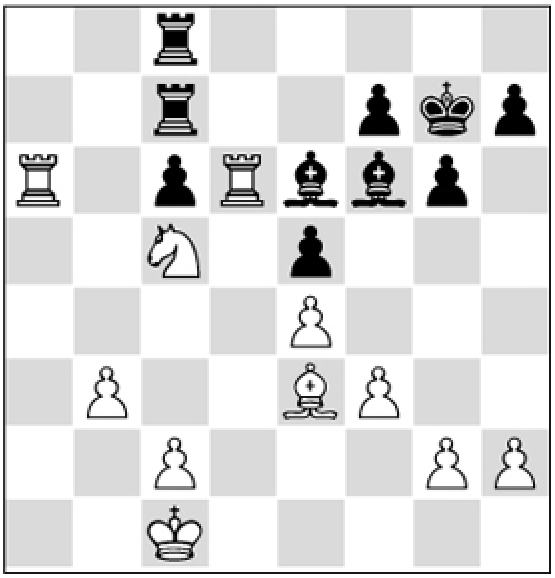

Only now does White take possession of the point weakened by his opponent on the 9th move, but its occupation had always been in the air.

28…♖d8 29.♖xe6

Black resigned.

In the notes to this game we became better acquainted with the resources available to the defender of a file. Since such a knowledge may be of the greatest practical value in the conduct of a game, we give a second example that is instructive in a similar vein.

Game 10

Aron Nimzowitsch
Siegbert Tarrasch
Breslau 1925
Queen’s Pawn Game

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3

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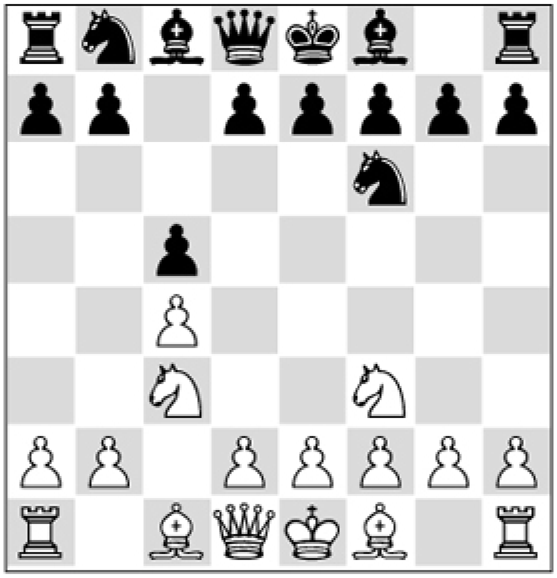

3…d5

Playable; but 3…e6 (4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b4) or 3…♘c6 seems more solid. For instance, 3…♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 g6. Now it is certainly true that White could try to slowly tie up his opponent by means of 6.e4, but this attempt could be sufficiently parried by 6…♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘g4! (Breyer) 8.♕xg4 ♘xd4 9.♕d1! ♘e6! (my suggestion).

The position reached after 9…♘e6 is fairly rich in resources, namely (1) …♕a5; (2) …0-0 followed by …f7-f5; (3) …b7-b6 and …♗b7. The student should investigate these lines of play for himself.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.d4 cxd4

Best for Black here seems 5…♘xc3 6.bxc3 cxd4 7.cxd4 e6.

6.♕xd4 e6

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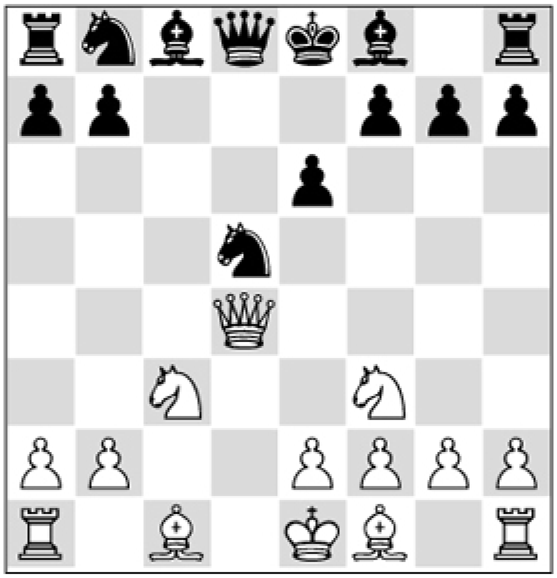

7.e3

A very restrained move, which I decided on because I had recognized that the more enterprising continuations 7.e4 and 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.e4 were less effective; e.g., 7.e4 ♘xc3! 8.♕xc3 (after 8.♕xd8+ and 9.bxc3 White would have a sickly c-pawn on an open file that he would have to tend to) 8…♘c6 9.a3 ♕a5! or 9.♗b5 ♗d7, with equality. Or 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.e4 dxe4! 9.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10.♘g5 ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12.♔xd2 ♔e7, with a level game. The student who occupies himself with the problems of development might test the following variation: 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.e4 ♘c6 (instead of the 8…dxe4! given by us). After 9.♕xd5 ♕xd5 10.exd5 ♘b4, 11.♗b5+ would follow, when Black would be at a loss for a good continuation.

7…♘c6 8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.♘e5 ♘xc3 11.♘xc6 ♕xd4 12.♘xd4 ♘d5 13.♗d2

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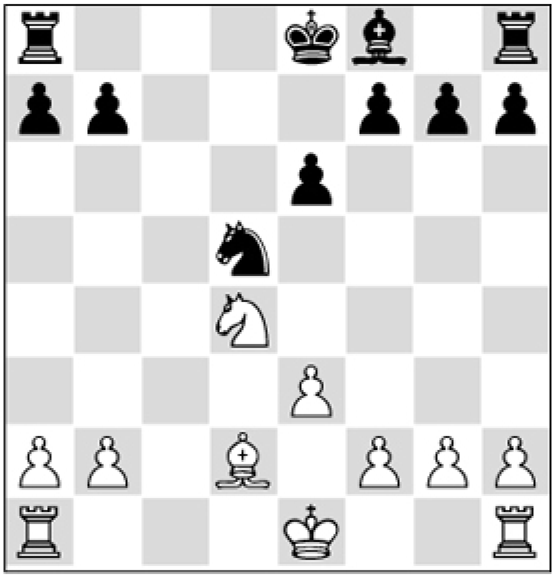

This position, for all its apparent harmlessness, is full of poison. White is threatening to take over the c-file; moreover, he has at his disposal a convenient square for his king (e2), whereas this is true for Black only to a limited extent (see the note to the 17th move).

In such positions the defender has to play with extreme care.

13…♝c5

To drive the knight away from the center; but as the knight goes to b3 in order to ‘crown’ c5 as an outpost point, 13…♗c5 will prove to be pleasant for White. Best seems 13…♗e7, intending …♗f6; e.g., 14.e4 ♘b6 15.♖c1 0-0 16.♔e2. Now White is indeed full of pride in his developed king, but the black majesty can in this case renounce all thought of development, since the bishop at e7 is a crafty minister who is able to keep all the affairs of government under his own power. For example, 16.♔e2 ♗f6! 17.♗e3 ♖fc8 18.b3 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 and now 19…♖xc1 20.♖xc1 ♖c8 21.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 22.♔d3. The white majesty now comes into his own, true, but it is doubtful whether the black monarch will not be able to follow suit: 22…f6 23.♔c4 ♔f7 24.♔b5 a6+! (else the bishop sacrifice) 25.♔c5 ♔e7 followed by …♔d7 and a draw.

Hence, 13…♗e7 was the right defense.

14.♞b3

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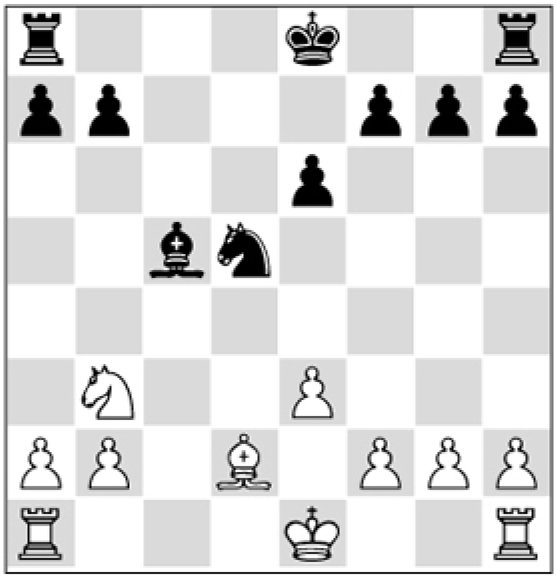

14…♝b4

But here, 14…♗d6 or 14…♗e7 would have been decidedly better. 14…♗b6 would have secured c7 against invasion, and this is an imperative duty for the defense! After 14…♗b6 15.e4 ♘e7! White’s advantage would be minimal.

15.♖c1 ♖d8 16.♝xb4 ♘xb4 17.♚e2 ♚e7

Black has cleared a square for his king, but at what a cost of time! (…♗c5-b4)

18.♖c4 ♘a6

An unpleasant retreat. If 18…♘c6, 19.♘c5 would not have been the follow-up in view of the reply 19…b6!, but rather first a doubling of the rooks, when Black would be unfavorably placed.

19.♖hc1 ♖d7

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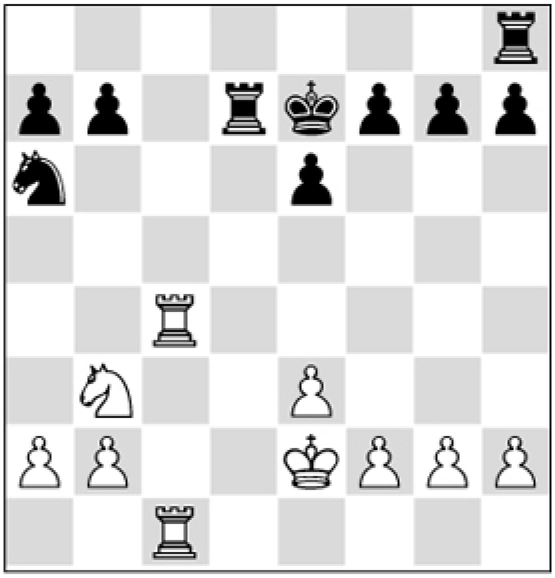

Black’s position still makes an impression that inspires a good deal of confidence in it – well, at least for the moment, for it already carries the seeds of death within it. White’s next two moves reduce the black d-file to passivity, that is to say, they take away from it any possible attacking value.

20.f4 ♖hd8 21.♘d4 f6

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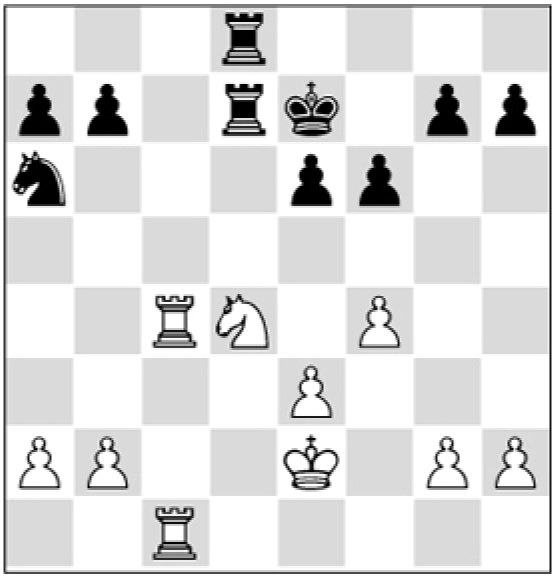

Black intends …e6-e5. Is this a threat? If not, the student should find a sensible waiting move!

22.a4!

Even the double-step of a pawn can entail a waiting policy. White by no means fears the move …e6-e5, for after 22…e5 23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♘f3 the pawn at e5 would be weak. But the energetic 22.b4 came into consideration, though after 22…b5! this would have been less advantageous than the move chosen. Now, however, this b2-b4 advance is threatened, constricting Black still further.

22…e5

This attempt to strike out from a cramped position is psychologically understandable, even if in an objective sense it is not altogether justified. So, too, in the position before us. It is true that Black would stand badly in any case.

23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♘f3 ♚e6 25.b4 b6

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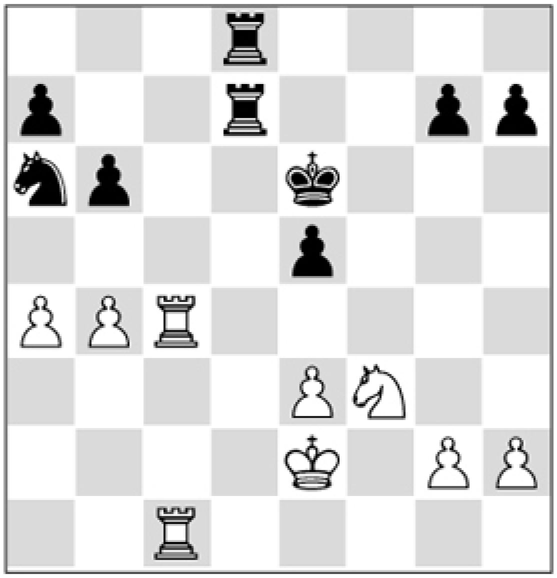

26.♜1c2!

One of those unpretentious moves that are more disagreeable to an opponent who is cramped and besieged by all sides than the most serious direct threat. It is a ‘protective’ and ‘waiting’ move, but also involves a few menacing effects – though by the nature of things this latter fact is only of minimal importance, for indeed any inherent threats as such are in this position a minor matter. The (minor) threat is 27.♘g5+ followed by ♘e4, then b4-b5, driving the knight back to b8.

26…h6 27.h4! ♜d6 28.h5

As a result of 26.♖1c2, quite new attacking possibilities have arisen – in particular, g7 has become backward. The maneuver ♖c4-g4 would, however, not only help highlight the weakness of the g-pawn as such but, much more, would also place the black king in an extremely dire situation. All these possibilities have fallen like ripe fruit into White's lap, simply and solely as the logical (or psychological) consequence of the waiting move 26.♖1c2. The finest moves are precisely the waiting moves!

28…♜d5 29.♜g4 ♜5d7 30.♜c6+

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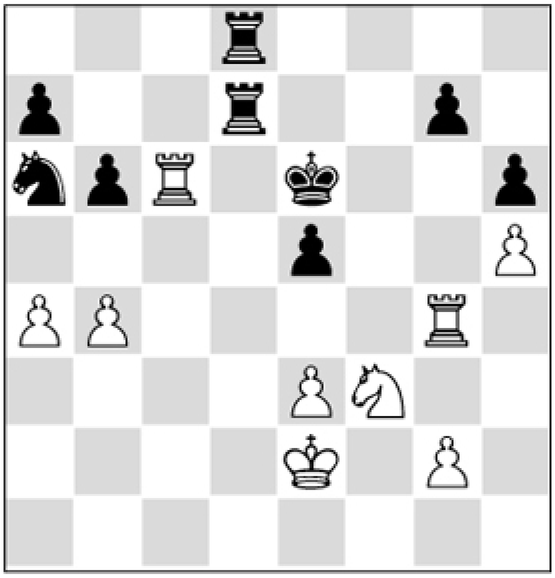

30…♜d6

On 30…♔f5? there would follow 31.♖cg6 and mate. If 30…♔d5 31.♖cg6 e4!, 32.♘d2 ♘xb4 33.♘xe4 would be the advantageous consequence for White.

31.♜g6+

Possession of the c6- and g6-squares ensures the perfect envelopment of the enemy king. Note how the c-file has been used as a jumping-off point to get to the g-file (c4-g4).

31…♚e7

On 31…♔d5 there would follow a pretty little catastrophe: 32.♖cxd6+ ♖xd6 33.e4+ ♔c6 34.b5+, when the knight, who has felt so completely secure at a6, to his own surprise is lost!

32.♖xg7+ ♔f8 33.♖xd6 ♖xd6 34.♖xa7 ♘xb4 35.♘xe5 ♖e6

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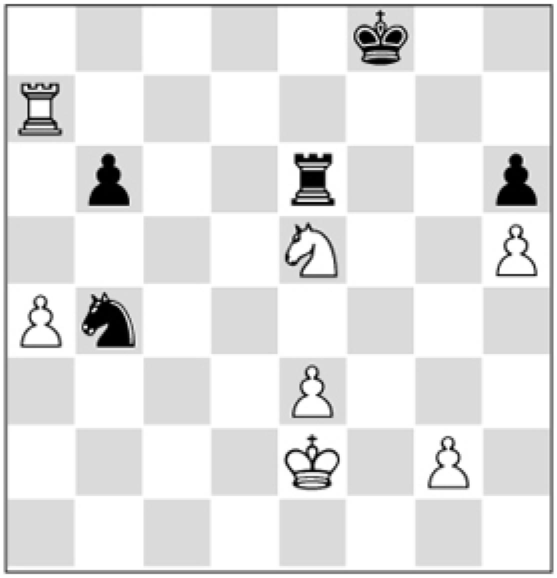

White is winning. Bringing superior material to account is among the most important factors in chess, and one for which the student can never get enough training.

White has now won two pawns. A glance at the position reveals that:

(1) the 7th rank is in White’s possession, and

(2) the e3-pawn is isolated and the g2-pawn backward.

Hence it is required, by making use of the 7th rank, to meld together and unify the isolated or dislocated troop detachments. For this purpose the knight is directed to f5, with gain of tempo.

36.♘g6+ ♔g8! 37.♘e7+ ♔f8 38.♘f5 ♘d5 39.g4

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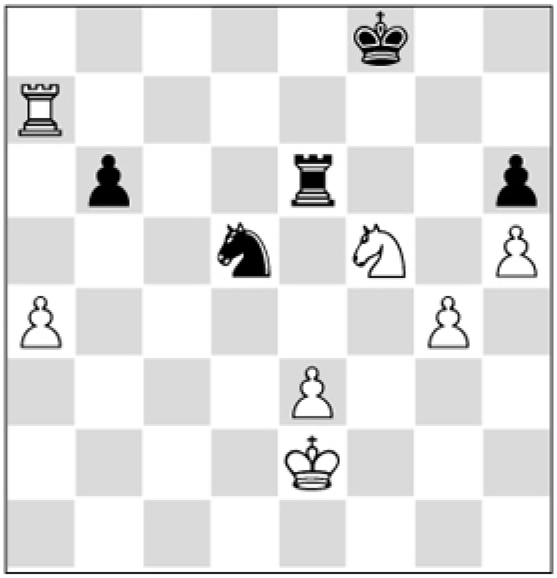

The f5-knight has the effect described above: it protects e3, attacks h6, and makes ♔f3 possible (the king is so fearful that he hides behind his horse).

39…♞f4+ 40.♚f3 ♞d3

In order on White’s 41.♖h7 to protect the h-pawn with 41…♘e5+ and 42…♘f7.

41.♜a8+! ♚f7 42.♜h8 ♞c5 43.♜h7+

On revient toujours à sà premiere amour! Long live the 7th rank!

43…♚g8

For 43…♔f8 44.♘xh6 would give White a mating attack – otherwise the advance of the g-pawn could not be held up.

44.♜xh6 ♜xh6 45.♞xh6+ ♚f8 46.♞f5 ♞xa4 47.h6 ♚g8 48.g5 ♚h7 49.♚g4 ♞c5 50.♚h5

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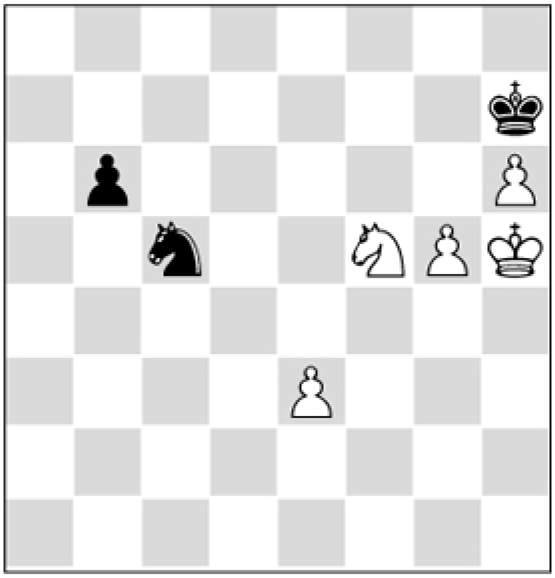

By the motto ‘The whole ensemble advances’!
(See Chapter 6.)

50…♘e6 51.g6+ ♔g8 52.h7+ ♔h8 53.♔h6

Black resigned.

The following game brings us the ‘restricted advance’ (of a rook) on an open file, in which the file does not appear as it were sporadically, like summer lightning, but rather dominates the field throughout.
The student may learn from this how tightly the ‘elements’ are incorporated into the higher technique of the game. A profound knowledge of the elements amounts to more than half the journey to chess mastery.

Game 11

George Thomas
Alexander Alekhine
Baden-Baden 1925
Alekhine’s Defense

1.e4 ♘f6 2.d3 c5 3.f4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗e2 ♗g7 6.♘bd2 d5 7.0-0 0-0 8.♔h1 b6 9.exd5 ♕xd5 10.♕e1 ♗b7 11.♘c4

This position of the knight is (poor) consolation for White’s inharmoniously constructed position (the bishop at e2). Black’s game is completely superior. At his 5th move (or even earlier) White should have played c2-c4.

11…♘d4

An outpost on the d-file.

12.♘e3 ♕c6 13.♗d1 ♘d5 14.♘xd4 cxd4 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗f3 ♕d7 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7

White has eased his position through exchanges, but the open c-file forces the following loosening move.

18.c4 dxc3 19.bxc3 ♖ac8 20.♗b2 ♖fd8 21.♖f3 ♗f6 22.d4

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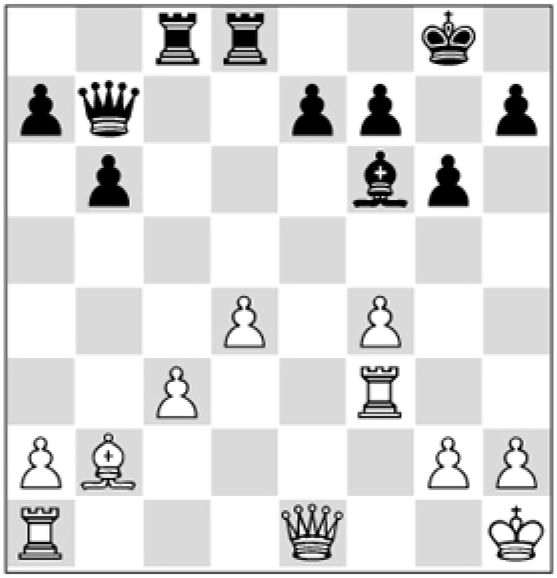

We have arrived at a position well known from the Queen's Gambit, with colors reversed. Compare the following, the beginning of a consultation game, Nimzowitsch vs. Prof. Kudriavtsev and Dr. Landau (Dorpat 1910): 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♗e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.♘xc6 bxc6; now, with colors reversed, we have the same pawn configuration as in Thomas-Alekhine. There followed 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.♖c1 ♖b8 13.♕c2 ♗d7 14.♖fd1. 'The well-known theme of the isolated pawn pair at c6 and d5 now comes up for discussion.' (A. Nimzowitsch, in *Deutsches Wochenschach*, 1910) 14…♘e8 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘a4 ♘f6 17.♘c5 ♖b6 18.♖d4! ♖fb8 19.b3 ♗e8 20.♗d3 h6 21.♕c3 ♗d7 22.♖a4 (see diagram), with a significant positional advantage.

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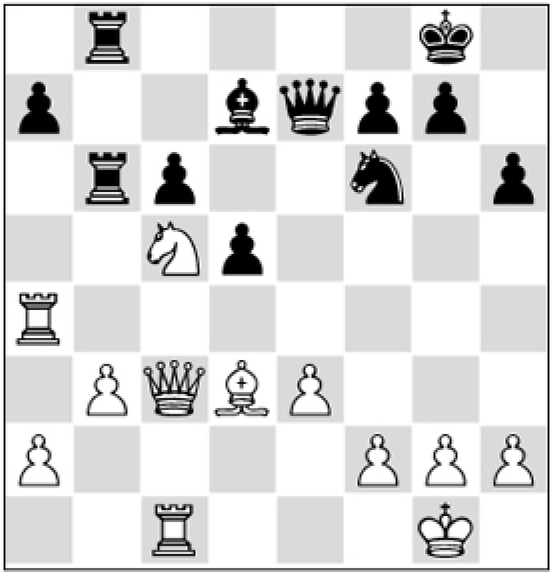

(position after 22.♖a4, from the game Nimzowitsch-Allies)

We return to the Alekhine game.

22…♕d5 23.♕e3 ♕b5 24.♕d2 ♜d5 25.h3 e6 26.♜e1 ♕a4 27.♜a1 b5 28.♕d1 ♜c4

The restricted advance or else the c-file as a jumping-off point to the a-file (see Section 5 of Chapter 2). Notice the similarity of the maneuver in this game to that found in the consultation game cited above.

29.♕b3 ♜d6 30.♚h2 ♜a6

The d-file is also used as a jumping-off point.

31.♜ff1 ♝e7 32.♚h1

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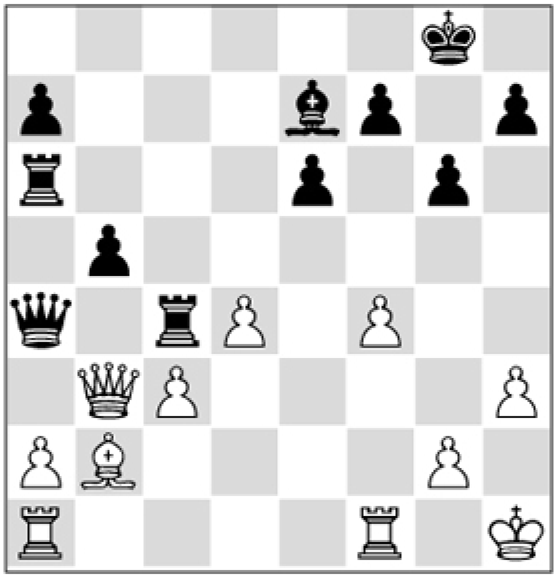

32…♜cc6

Very fine! The regrouping …♕c4, …♖aa4, and …♖ca6 is planned.

33.♜fe1 ♝h4 34.♜f1

White dare not weaken his own base by, say, 34.♖e5?: 34…♕xb3 35.axb3 ♖xa1+ 36.♗xa1 ♖a6 37.♗b2 ♖a2 and wins.

34…♛c4! 35.♛xc4 ♜xc4

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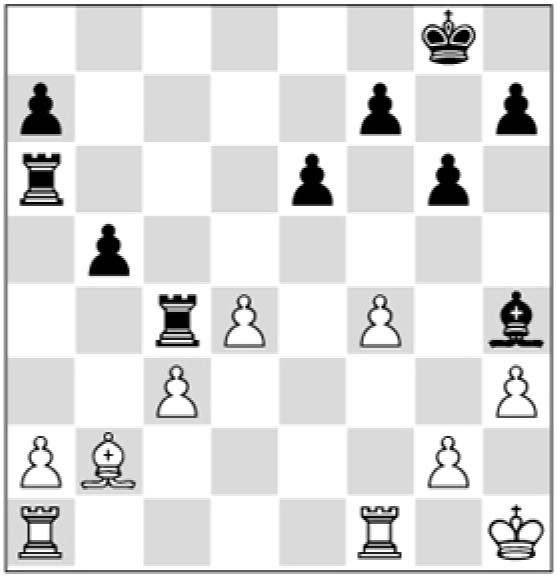


The exchange is grist to Black’s mill, for now a2 has become quite weak. The student should note that the exchange is a consequence – I might almost say, an automatic consequence – of the quiet occupation of strategically important points.

The beginner seeks to bring about an exchange in another way; he pursues the piece that is tempting him with (exchanging) proposals, and comes away with – a rebuff. The master player occupies the strong points, and the exchange he desires falls into his lap like a ripe fruit (see the introductory paragraph to Chapter 5).

36.a3 ♗e7 37.♖fb1 ♗d6 38.g3 ♔f8 39.♔g2 ♔e7

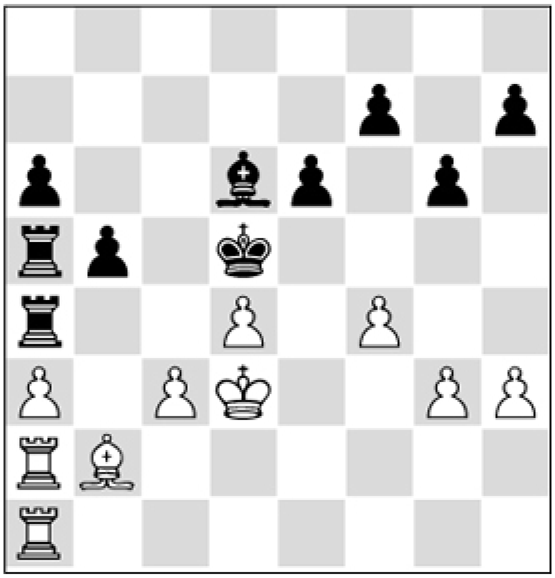
Centralization of the king (see Chapter 6, Section 1).

40.♔f2 ♔d7 41.♔e2 ♔c6 42.♖a2 ♖ca4 43.♖ba1 ♔d5

Centralization is complete.

44.♔d3 ♖6a5 45.♗c1 a6 46.♗b2

137



46…h5

A fresh attack, and yet the logical consequence of the play on the extreme queen’s wing; for the white rooks are chained to the a-pawn, and even if we were to accept that the black rooks are similarly immobile (which is not completely accurate, for they can be brought back into the game by way of c4, perhaps for an attack on c3), yet Black also has an undoubted plus in the more active position of his king. And the fact that this plus could weigh in the balance at all (for if the opposing rooks were mobile this advantage would be almost illusory) is, in turn, due solely to the fact that the white rooks, as a consequence of Black’s diversion, suffer from a lack of air.

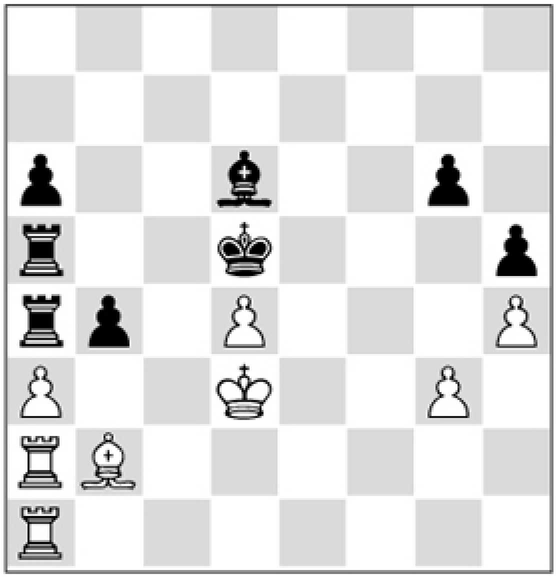
So the attack on the extreme flank has not immaterially increased the significance of the mobility of Black’s king. The strategic contact between the two seemingly separate theaters of war is now made clear. And the same is true here on the kingside: …h7-h5 was played to provoke h3-h4 so that, in view of the exposed g3-pawn, …e6-e5 can have a weighty effect. A very instructive case in the strategic sense, whose study we recommend to the student.

47.h4 f6 48.♗c1 e5

The breakthrough that puts the seal on White’s defeat.

49.fxe5 fxe5 50.♗b2 exd4 51.cxd4 b4!

138



As obvious as this move is, it must enchant every connoisseur of the game that the breakthrough had no other purpose than to get the annoying c3-pawn out of the way. This capacity for modesty is the finest adornment of the master player!

52.axb4 ♖xa2 53.bxa5 ♖xb2

White resigned. The ‘restricted advance’ was carried out with great virtuosity.

With this game we bid farewell to the open file and turn our attention to the passed pawn.

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Chapter 4

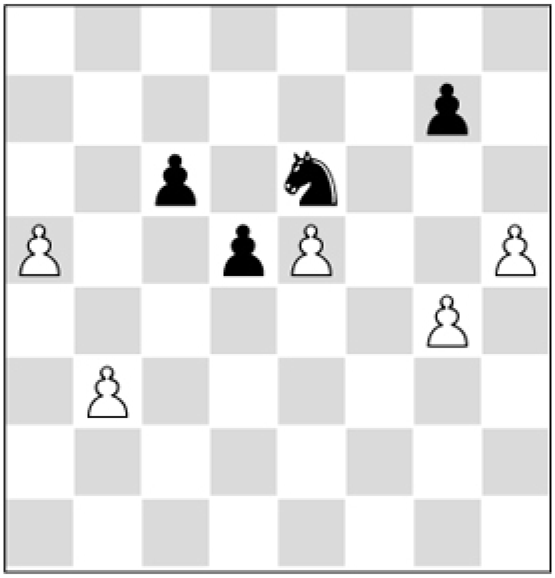
The Passed Pawn

1. By way of orientation

The neighbor who is disturbing in many respects and the direct antagonist, who is unpleasant in every respect. The candidate. The birth of the passed pawn. The candidate rule.

A pawn is passed if it has nothing to fear from either an enemy pawn in front of it (therefore on the same file) or from such a pawn on an adjacent file, and thus can proceed to the queening square unhindered (see Diagram 139).

139



White's a- and e-pawns and Black's d-pawn are passed. The e-pawn is 'passed' but blocked

If a pawn is limited in its forward progress only by the enemy pieces, this does not make the pawn any less 'passed.' We must give special recognition to a pawn in a situation where the enemy pieces have to give up some of their effective strength to keep the pawn under observation – and indeed under continuous observation!

If, further, we bear in mind that the pawn as such enjoys another advantage over the pieces, namely, the fact that it is a born defender, we shall gradually discover that even on the sixty-four squares the pawn (‘peasant’) is worthy of all respect.

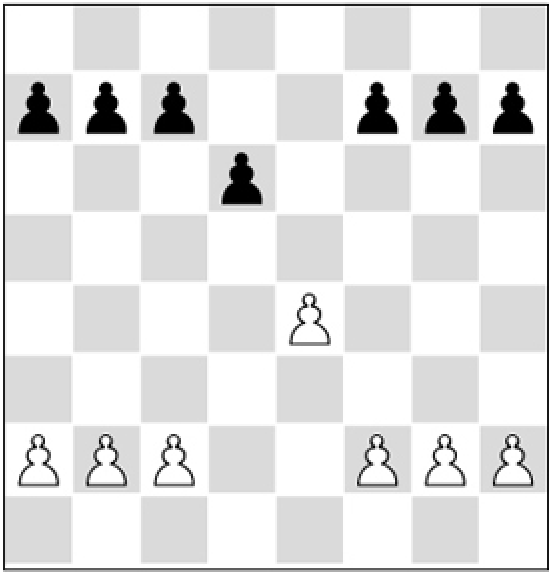
Who best obstructs an ambitious enemy pawn? The pawn. Who most securely protects one of his own pieces? The pawn. And which piece works for the lowest wage (the cheapest employee)? Again, the pawn, for it is not at all to a piece’s taste to keep watch over a pawn for an extended period; this, moreover, would draw troops away from the active army. When a pawn is so employed, this is much less the case.

In Diagram 139 neither the b-pawn nor the g-pawn is passed, yet the former is not as hindered as the latter, for the b-pawn at the very least has no direct antagonist. A pawn directly opposite to him might perhaps be compared to an enemy, while a pawn in the file adjacent to him reminds us rather of a kindly neighbor, who, as we know, can have a bit of a darker side. When, for example, we are on our way down the stairs in a hurry on our way to an important rendezvous, it not infrequently happens that a neighbor suddenly appears and involves us in a long conversation (about the weather, politics, and the high price of beer), persistently keeping us from proceeding to our business, just like the black c-pawn in Diagram 139 does.

Still, a neighbor given to a certain amount of chatter is far from being a bitter enemy – or, to carry the analogy over to our case: an annoying pawn on an adjacent file is far from being a real antagonist. In our diagram, the white g-pawn therefore does not have a lust to expand, while the b-pawn can still aspire to forward progress.

Let us now turn to the ‘family’ of the passed pawn. In this connection we must first consider the subject of a pawn majority. At the beginning of the game all the pawns are evenly distributed, but after the first pawn exchange (e.g., 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♕xd4) we can see majorities: White has 4 against 3 on the kingside, Black 4 to 3 on the queenside. Let us imagine a black pawn standing on d6 for the purpose of restraining the e4-pawn. The pawn configuration would therefore be as in Diagram 140:

140

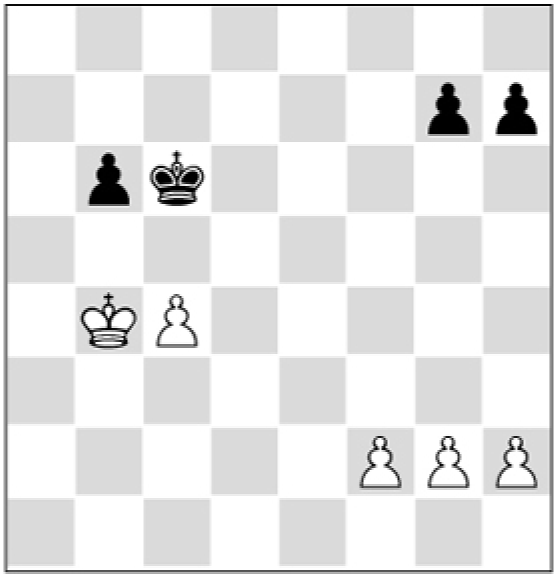


White has a pawn majority on the kingside and Black a majority on the queenside

If in the course of the game Black succeeds in playing …f7-f5, killing White’s almost-passed central pawn, the majority as such will then become ever more clear, that is, white pawns at f2, g2, and h2 vs. pawns on g7 and h7.

RULE**: Every sound, uncompromised pawn majority must be able to generate a passed pawn.** (see Diagram 141).

141



A majority on the kingside

Of the three kingside pawns, the f-pawn is the only one that does not have an antagonist; this pawn is therefore the least impeded and for this reason has the best claim to become ‘free’, or passed; it is accordingly the legitimate candidate. And we give it this title as though we were bestowing on it an academic degree: Professor Candidate. (In a pawn majority the pawn that has no antagonist is therefore the candidate.) From this we have the laconic formulation:

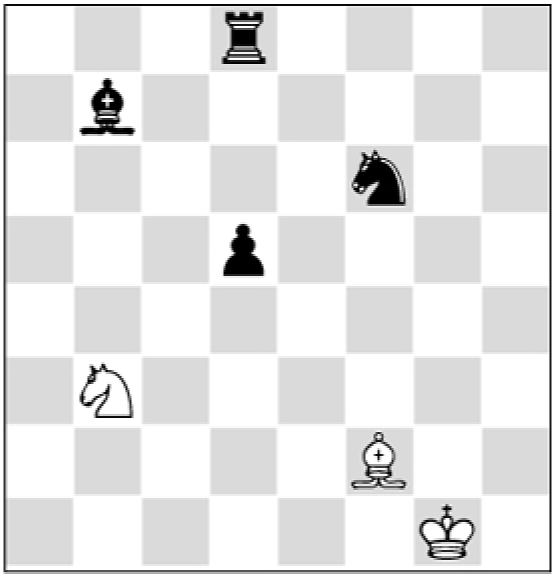
RULE: **The candidate pawn has precedence.**

This rule is dictated not by strategic necessity but rather, as you will grant, by ‘civil obligation’ (hence never to be forgotten by anyone who regards himself as a civil person, which we all do). Stated with scientific precision, the rule is expressed as follows: the spearhead of the advance is in the hands of the candidate; the other pawns are to be regarded merely as supports. Hence f2-f4-f5, then g2-g4-g5 and f5-f6.
In the case of black pawns on g6 and h5, White plays f2-f4-f5, g2-g3 (not at once h2-h2 because of …h5-h4, causing symptoms of paralysis), h2-h3, g3-g4, and f4-f5. How simple! And yet we often see weaker players first moving the g-pawn forward in the diagrammed position. Then …g7-g5 follows and the majority is worthless. I have often racked my brain trying to understand why less-experienced players begin with g2-g4. The matter is easy to explain: the players referred to are undecided whether they should begin on the right (h2-h4) or on the left (f2-f4), and in their perplexity they decide, according to good social custom, to choose the golden mean.

2. The blockade of passed pawns

The reasons for the duty to blockade, and why these stated reasons are and must be of the greatest importance not only for the chess thinker (= chess theoretician) but also for the practical player. The exceedingly complicated, because ever-varying, relations between the passed pawn and the blockader. On strong and weak, elastic and inelastic blockaders.

142



The problem of the blockade

In the position shown in Diagram 142 Black has a passed pawn, which however can be blockaded by ♘d4 or ♗d4. By blockade we mean the mechanical stopping of an enemy pawn by a piece. This stoppage is achieved by placing one of one’s own pieces directly in front of the pawn to be blockaded. In this and in all similar cases the question arises: does not this blockade entail an unnecessary expenditure of energy? For isn’t it sufficient to keep the pawn under observation (in our position, with the bishop and knight that bear on d4)? Is the blockading action in general worth using a piece for? Will not the mobility of the piece be diminished to the extent that it takes its blockading duties seriously, and will it not see its action reduced to a significant degree? Will it not be degraded to the status of a stopped (immobilized) pawn? Briefly put, is the blockade economical?

I am pleased to be able to offer you what I think is a rigorous solution to this problem we have raised. The mediocre critic would settle the question with the brief declaration that passed pawns must be stopped. But in my view this would be evidence of the critic’s pathetic lack of understanding! The why and wherefore are extraordinarily important. It would be ludicrous to offer for publication a novel that does not include the psychological factor, just as I think it would be ridiculous to want to write a textbook of chess strategy without going deeper into the nature of the pieces at work in the game.

If in what follows the viewpoint just outlined still comes across to the reader as unfamiliar and strange, I nevertheless can only emphasize the fact that for me the passed pawn and all the other actors in the game have a soul, just like a human being, and have wishes that slumber unrecognized within them, and fears, of whose existence they are only dimly aware (see the foreword to this book).

But quite apart from this consideration, the detailed reasons why one is duty bound to undertake a blockade involve a more practical design than the despiser of theory (theory in the sense of a philosophy of chess, not in the sense of opening knowledge) may à priori be inclined to assume. The existence of a practical design is not of course something that I am creating as a mitigating circumstance – for what would I want with mitigating circumstances! The attentive reader is not accusing me of anything – he has long understood that knowledge as such must be of the greatest practical value even without any design whatsoever! And it is for him, the attentive reader, that my book has been written.

And now to proceed to the order of the day: There are three reasons that logically compel us to undertake a blockade. These are to be analyzed under Sections 2a, 2b, and 2c. In Section 3 the effectiveness of the blockader will be put under the microscope.

2a) The first reason

The passed pawn is a criminal that belongs under lock and key. Tepid measures, such as police surveillance, are not enough! The passed pawn’s lust to expand. The awakening of the men in the rear.

We now return to the position in Diagram 142.

The black troops, bishop, rook, and knight, as we like to say, are grouped around the passed pawn; i.e., they willingly arrange themselves in a complex (with the d5-pawn as its nucleus). The knight and bishop protect the passed pawn; in addition, the rook at d8 lends it a certain impetus and is therefore ‘supporting’ it. So powerful is the pawn’s lust to expand in this instance (which we can see at once by the way the pieces, laying aside all pride in their caste, picturesquely arrange themselves around this humble foot soldier) that the d-pawn often seems ready to advance on its own accord, when such an act would cost it its life. So, for instance, …d5-d4 and then either ♘xd4 or ♗xd4, and now the black forces in the rear have suddenly come to life. The bishop at b7 now has a diagonal aimed at the enemy king, the rook has an open file, and the knight has a new central square. This accelerated advance, for the sake of opening lines at the cost of self-annihilation, is in most cases characteristic of a pawn roller (a compact advancing mass of pawns in the center). See the odds-game in Chapter 1, Section 2, which provides brilliant proof of the passed pawn's lust to expand, for the mobile center (the pawn roller) is imbued with an almost incredible vigor. The clearing of a square for a piece, however, forms, as it seems to us, a quite specific feature of the passed pawn's advance.

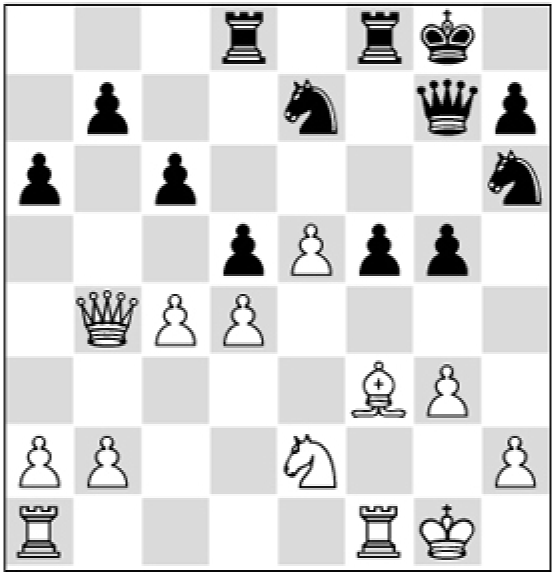
Accordingly, we say that the first reason that logically compels us to blockade is the fact that the passed pawn is such a dangerous 'criminal' that it is by no means enough to put it under police surveillance (by the knight on b3 and the bishop at f2). No, the fellow has to be placed under lock and key – so we take away his freedom completely by blockading him with a knight on d4.

The process just illustrated – we mean the sacrifice of the passed pawn – is altogether typical (he will fall when he marches forward!), although it doesn't seem necessary that a whole host of men behind the pawn should come to life. Often it is only a single piece that profits by the advance, but that is enough.

Why did we let three pieces 'come to life'? Well, with the same justification as, say, Ibsen, who in the final scene of his play *Ghosts* compressed the long-winded unfolding of the disease process into a single, emotionally dramatic scene. And just as the humdrum critics (and doctors as well) attacked Ibsen terribly because he falsified the clinical picture (!), the corresponding critics of chess will accuse me of hyperbole…

Now for some examples.

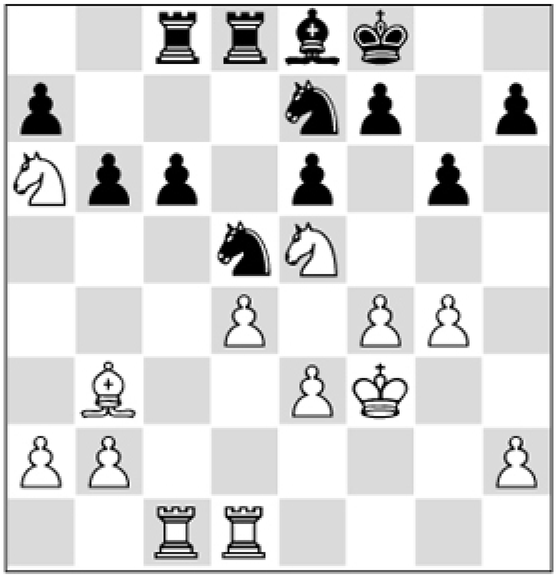
143



Black sacrifices a candidate, and a piece behind the pawns comes to life. How?

Diagram 143 is from **Te Kolsté-Nimzowitsch** (Baden-Baden 1925). Black, whose queenside and center appear to be under threat, seeks to turn his candidate to account. Since this candidate is ninety percent a passed pawn, the same rules apply to it as for a passed pawn. There followed **19…f4! 20.gxf4 g4! 21.♗g2 ♘hf5**; i.e., the sacrifice of a passed pawn (candidate), thus freeing up a square (f5) for a piece to the rear, the knight at h6. The game continued **22.♕b3 dxc4 23.♕xc4+ ♔h8 24.♕c3 h5 25.♖ad1 h4 26.♖d3 ♘d5 27.♕d2 ♖g8** Black supports his pawn majority vigorously. **28.♗xd5 cxd5 29.♔h1 g3** and Black obtained an attack.

144



Alekhine-Treybal, Baden-Baden 1925

The game **Alekhine-Treybal** (Diagram 144) saw the following interesting transaction: **27.e4** The mobile center is set in motion. **27…f6** For 27…♘c7 would lose the c-pawn. **28.exd5 fxe5** The passed d5-pawn that has suddenly come into existence is obviously a mayfly, the fruit of a sudden inspiration, and seemingly destined to pass away just as quickly. But appearances are deceiving: even this butterfly-like, unearthly, poetically glorified d5-pawn knows enough to subordinate itself to the iron laws of chess logic. There now occurred **29.d6!!**. Here the sacrifice of the pawn is not for the purpose of freeing up the square from which it moved, and yet its advance is entirely in the spirit, if not to the letter, of our rule. The pawn lays down its life by advancing. The main variation would now be: **29…e4+!** To prevent, after 29…♖xd6, the possible capture 30.fxe5. **30.♚xe4 ♜xd6 31.♚e5!! ♜cd8 32.♝xe6** Note that the intervention by the king was made possible only because of the pawn sacrifice **29.d6**.

And now a complete game that shows in genuine, full-game dress the threatening operation that is so important for us.

Paul Leonhardt
Aron Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1912

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 exd4

Surrendering the center. Later on Black will seek to restrain White’s e4-pawn. (See also Game 2.)

5.♘xd4 ♗e7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘xc6 bxc6

This exchange creates advantages for both sides. Black gets a compact central pawn mass that safeguards the outpost square d5 from a possible ♘d5; but the a7-pawn is isolated and the c5-square can become weak, as in the game.

9.b3 d5

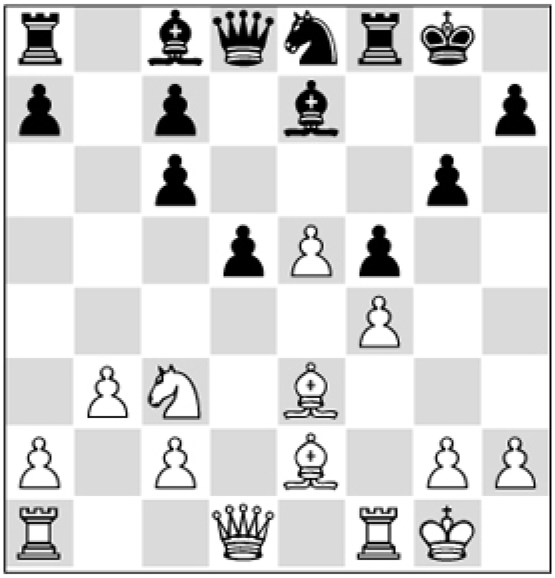
Completely playable here is 9…♖e8 followed by …♗f8, with a fully constructed restraint.

10.e5 ♘e8 11.f4 f5

Otherwise f4-f5 with a significant attack.

12.♗e3 g6!

145



White’s e5-pawn is to be blockaded, but it is by no means a matter of indifference whether this blockade is undertaken by a bishop or knight. The first solution would be inelastic, reducing its range of action, at best as far as g4 (that is, it would make g2-g4, which would attack

Black's minority, more difficult), and the bishop would be subject to attack, namely by a potential knight on c5 that could not be driven away. In contrast, a knight on e6 would not only be an excellent blockader (as it would be just about invulnerable to attack) but at the same time would be very aggressive (among others, preparing …g7-g5). It is often of the greatest importance to find the right blockader.

13.♘a4! ♘g7 14.♕d2 ♕d7

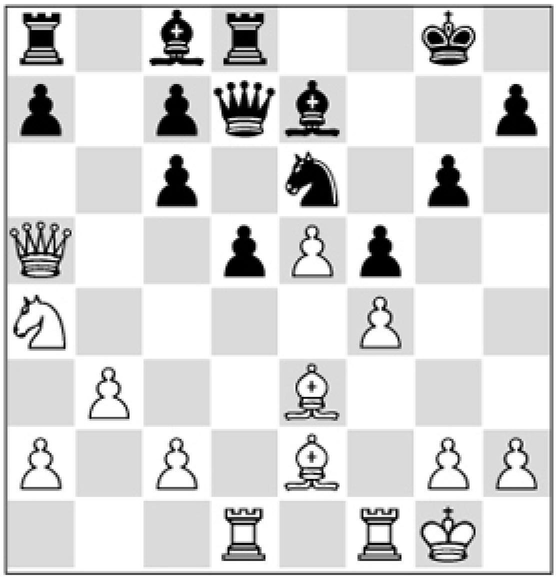
To follow up with …♖d8 as soon as possible.

15.♕a5

Combining continuing pressure on c5 (cf. the note to Black's 8th move) with play against the weak (because isolated) pawn on a7.

15…♘e6 16.♖ad1 ♖d8

146



17.♘c5?

A positional mistake. White should try to retain his knight as the ultimate blockader, or at least to exchange it for Black's knight. The situation is this: the two knights are the principal actors in this position, as they are the best blockaders, and the player who gives up one of these proud steeds for a bishop has in this position made a bad bargain. Correct was 17.♗c5.

17…♗xc5 18.♗xc5 ♗b7 19.♖f3 ♔f7 20.♖h3 ♔g7 21.♖f1 ♖e8 22.♖hf3 ♖ad8

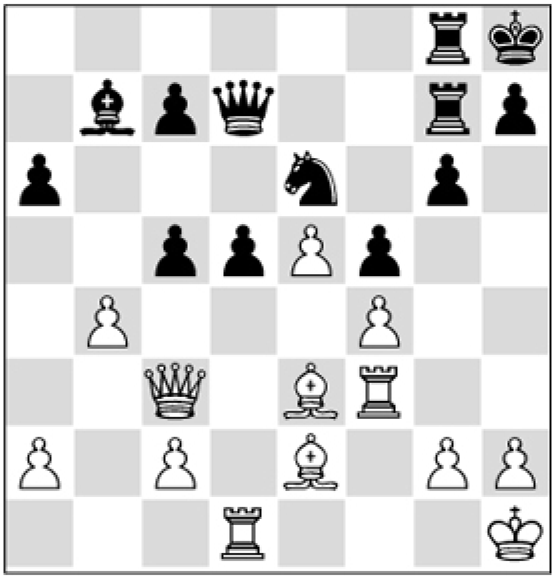
Because 23.♕xa7 is forbidden on account of 23…♖a8 24.♕xb7 ♖eb8, there is not very much that White can undertake.

23.♜d1 a6 24.b4 ♚h8 25.♛a3 ♜g8 26.♛c3 ♜g7 27.♚h1 ♜dg8

Black plans …g6-g5, when the knight on e6 would render priceless service. A comparison between the two blockaders, the knight on e6 and the bishop at c5, turns out in this case to be wholly in favor of the knight. The bishop performs its blockading function well enough, certainly, but otherwise its effectiveness is minimal.

28.♝e3 c5!

147



The pawns' lust to expand is brought to bear

This is the advance we have so often discussed: the bishop's diagonal is opened by means of a pawn sacrifice. But it might be objected that the c6-pawn is neither passed nor a candidate! True enough, and yet logically it must be filled with that lust to expand, else White would not have obstructed it for so long. So now the pawn takes its revenge for the restraint it has had to suffer.

29.♜g3

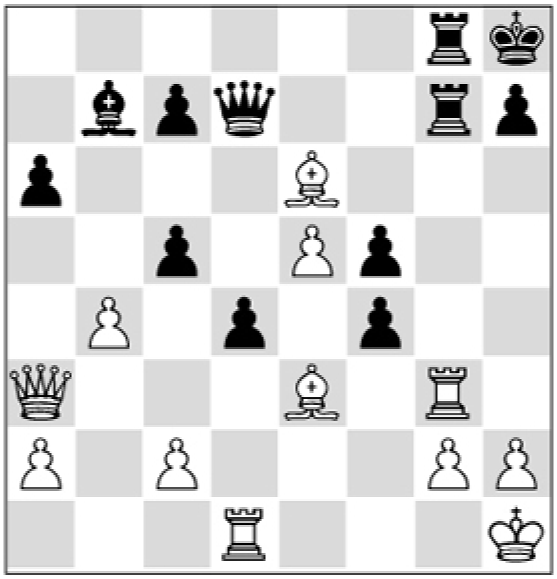
Best was 29.bxc5 d4 30.♖xd4! ♘xd4 31.♗xd4 ♗xf3 32.♗xf3, with two bishops and two pawns for the two rooks (suggested by Schlechter).

29…d4 30.♛a3 g5 31.♝c4 gxf4

Good too was 31…♗d5, to preserve the illustrious e6-knight.

32.♝xe6

148



How does Black follow up on his plan to break through?

32…♝xg2+!

Now the bishop becomes rabid, the death of the e6-knight has caused him to lose his mind!

33.♚g1

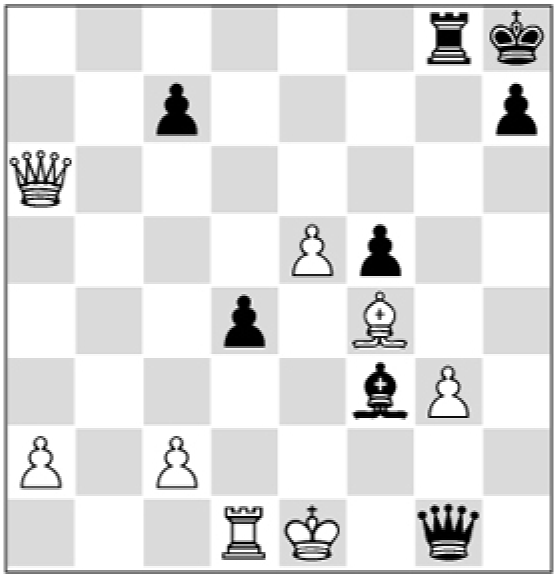
But behold, he still lives, this cheeky fellow, and in fact, after 33.♔xg2 (33.♖xg2? ♕c6!) 33…♕c6+ 34.♔f1 fxg3 35.♗xg8 gxh2 he would be bloodily avenged.

33…♛xe6

He who would regard 32…♗xg2+ as a bolt from a blue sky would show thereby that he has not fully grasped the logic that lay in this sudden ferocity of a bishop that had been held in check ‘for years on end.’

34.♝xf4 ♝b7 35.bxc5 ♛d5 36.c6 ♝xc6 37.♚f2 ♜xg3 38.hxg3 ♛g2+ 39.♚e1 ♝f3 40.♛xa6 ♛g1+

149



And White resigned.

This game throws into sharp relief the validity of the ‘first reason.’ We now proceed to an analysis of the second reason.

2b) The second reason

Optimism in chess and the secure position of the blockader against possible frontal attacks. The enemy pawn as our own protective wall. The deeper-lying mission of the blockading piece. The weak point.

In my book *The Blockade* I wrote about this as follows: ‘Also the second reason we have now to consider is of the greatest significance both from the strategic as well as the pedagogical standpoint. In chess, in the final analysis, optimism is of decisive importance. I mean by this that it is psychologically valuable to develop a talent for being able to rejoice over small advantages. The beginner ‘rejoices’ only when he can announce checkmate to his opponent, or perhaps even more when he can win the other’s queen (for in the eyes of the beginner this is if anything the greater achievement). The master player, in contrast, is already happy, and royally content, if he can spot the shade of an enemy pawn weakness in some corner or other of the left-hand side of the board!

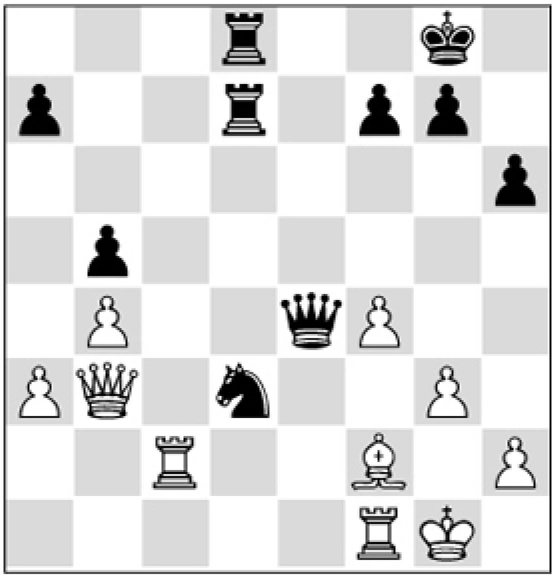
‘The optimism described here forms the indispensable basis of positional play. This optimism is also what gives us strength in the face of every evil, however great it may be, to discover the brighter side of the situation that for now remains faint and tentative. In the case under consideration we can state positively that for us an enemy passed pawn unquestionably represents a serious evil. But even this evil still contains within it the hint of a brighter side. The situation is this: in the case of the blockade of such a passed pawn we have the chance to position the blockading piece securely behind the back of the enemy pawn itself. In other words, the blockader is safe from frontal attacks. For example, consider a black passed pawn at e4 and a white knight at e3; this blockading knight is not vulnerable to an attack by a black rook on the e-file (…♖e8xe3) and so enjoys some measure of security there.’

So far *The Blockade*. To these remarks we just want to add that the relative security just outlined, in which the blockader is cradled (this sounds like a paradox: a firmly established blockader and – a cradle!), must ultimately and in the profoundest sense be symptomatic of that deeper mission that the blockader has to fulfil. If nature, and indeed even the enemy as well, are concerned about the safety of the blockader, he must have been chosen specially to accomplish great deeds. And in fact, this reckoning is correct – the blockading point often becomes a ‘weak’ point for the opponent.

I can well imagine that the path to a real grasp (knowledge) of the concept of a ‘weak point’ may have led beyond the blockading square itself. The opponent has a passed pawn, we stopped it, and now, all of a sudden, the piece that is stopping it is exerting a most disagreeable pressure. The enemy pawn provides precisely the natural defensive position for the blockader that is now surveying the position. The concept, once understood, was subsequently broadened and dematerialized in the discussion that followed. Broadened, because we just now designated any square right in front of the enemy pawn as weak, whether this pawn was passed or not, if there were any possibility of settling down on this square without fear of being driven away. Hence, over time we have become more amenable and put up with an ordinary forest cultivator or meadow farmer, and why not? In the back of an ordinary pawn one can quite well place enemy rooks, so disconcerting in their linearity.

But the concept of a weak point was also de-materialized. When, for instance, Dr. Lasker speaks of weak light squares (see Diagram 150, from the game Tartakower-Lasker, St. Petersburg 1909), the presence of an enemy pawn as a protective wall for the piece occupying the weak square is no longer a conditio sine qua non.

150



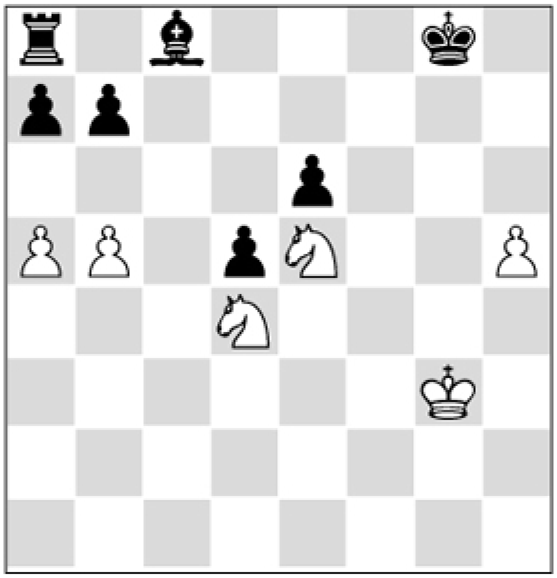
Weak light squares (Tartakower-Dr. Lasker, St. Petersburg 1909)

2c) The third reason

The paralysis resulting from a blockade is by no means ‘local’ in its nature! The transplanting of the paralysis-phenomena to the rear. On the dual nature of the pawn as such. On the pessimistic outlook, and how this can congeal into the blackest melancholy.

In the game Leonhardt-Nimzowitsch (in Section 2a) the white bishop at c5 blockaded the c-pawn; as a result, the bishop at b7 was made a prisoner in its own camp. This state of affairs would seem to be typical – all too often, an entire complex of enemy pieces is affected. Larger areas of the board can be made unusable for rapid maneuvering – indeed, the entire enemy position can at times take on a strangely in character. In other words, the paralysing effect has been transplanted from the blockaded pawn rearward to the area behind the pawn (see Diagram 151).

151



Transplanting the effects of the blockade to the area in the rear

In the diagrammed position the pawns at e6 and d5 are thoroughly blocked; the whole of Black’s position has in consequence taken on a strangely inelastic character. The bishop and rook are prisoners in their own camp, and White actually has winning chances in spite of his material deficit.

The state of affairs outlined here is in no way surprising. We have often pointed out that every pawn may be an obstacle to its own pieces, that to get rid of it is not infrequently an objective most dearly to be wished for – for example, if we are planning to open a file or snatch a post for a knight (see Section 2a). Hence the blockade is embarrassing not only to the pawn alone but much more so to his comrades in arms, the rooks and bishops.

In this connection it is important for the student to get a sense of a certain duality in the nature of the pawn. On the one hand, the pawn, as indicated above, is willing to give up its life, while on the other it tenaciously clings to life; for the presence of pawns is of the greatest importance not only for the endgame but, even more, for helping prevent the potential establishment of enemy pieces or the creation of weak squares in one’s camp. The emotionally painful impact felt by a mobile pawn at the hands of an enemy blockade can be explained in purely human (psychological) terms: from this pessimistic point of view, the pawn cannot be called ‘free’ (the duality of its inner nature). Is it any wonder that such pessimism, at the first great tragic conflict, congeals into the blackest melancholy (which even the white pawns can be caught in the grips of!), and that it should tend to transfer this melancholic and depressed voice to the other troops?

Whatever the case, the mobility of a passed pawn – especially one positioned in the center – often forms the vital nerve of the entire position. Hence the restraint of this pawn must of course have its reverberations throughout the position as a whole. So we see that there are weighty reasons for undertaking a blockade as soon as possible, while the rationale that seems to speak against the blockade, namely the seemingly uneconomic use of a piece, ostensibly demoted to a mere watchdog (blockader), on closer examination turns out to be true only in certain cases. To be able to recognize such instances we must turn our attention to the blockader itself.

3. The primary and secondary functions of the blockader

How the blockader behaves, when it rails and threatens, and how it responds when it is on holiday. The concept of elasticity. The various forms of this. The strong and the weak blockader. How the blockader meets the many demands made on it, partly on its own initiative, and why I see in this a proof of its vitality. The ‘seemingly uneconomic use of a piece that has supposedly been degraded to a watchdog’ is shown to be an untenable conception.

The primary function of a blockader is obviously to block the pawn in question and to do so competently. In this sense, the blockader itself tends to be immobile. And yet (what vitality!) it not infrequently displays a considerable activity. Namely:

(1) by carrying out threats from its location – see Section 2a for the game Leonhardt-Nimzowitsch, in which the knight on e6 prepares … g6-g5;

(2) by exhibiting a certain elasticity that expresses itself in the fact that on occasion the blockader leaves its post. Such a holiday seems justified:

(a) if the journey holds the promise of worthwhile results – but in this case all the connections must be carried out by express trains;

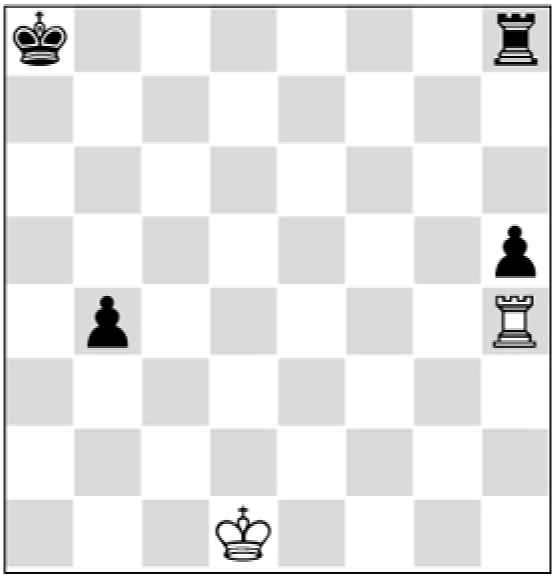
(b) if the blockader can get back in time to block the pawn from another square, should the pawn have advanced in the meantime;

(c) if it is in a position to leave behind a deputy that can see to the blockade. It is evident that this deputy must be chosen from those ancillary pieces that are also participating in the blockade.

This last factor, despite appearances, is of the greatest importance: it shows clearly the extent to which elasticity, at least in the form considered under (c), is directly dependent on the effectiveness (weak or strong) of the blockade.

Regarding (a), see Nimzowitsch-Nilsson (Diagram 189). Regarding (b), see Diagram 152:

152



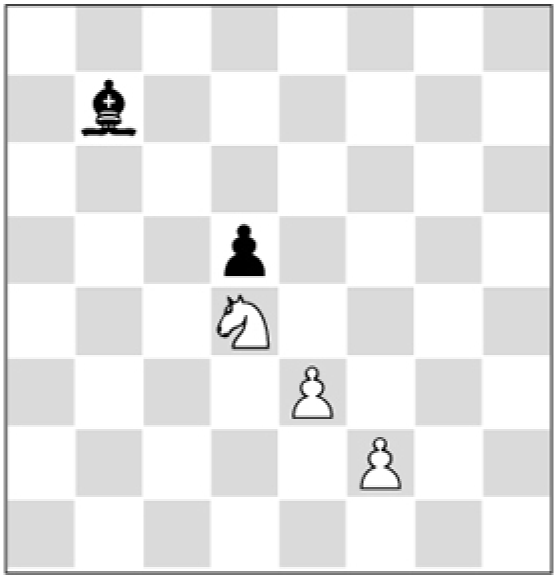
The rook goes on holiday

In this simplest of positions the blockader goes off on a little holiday: **1.♖xb4** The black pawn will of course take advantage of the opportunity to advance: **1…h4 2.♖b2 h3 3.♖h2** ‘Mister Rook’ shows up in the office, bows to the boss, greets his colleagues, and takes his seat, looking rejuvenated and refreshed (although in truth he was in a mad rush to show up on time), at his blockade-desk. The blockader has, incidentally, changed his seat, from h4 to h2. The maneuver indicated here may be found repeated in many examples.

With respect to (c), see the bishop on f4 in the game Nimzowitsch-Freymann (Game 13).

From the little sketch above, under (a), (b), and (c), we see that elasticity is slight if the pawn to be blockaded is far advanced. The maximum of elasticity, in contrast, develops when a blockader obstructs a half-passed pawn in the center of the board; e.g., White with pawns on e3 and f2 and a knight on d4; Black with a pawn on d5 and a bishop at b7 (see Diagram 153).

153



The knight at d4 is an elastic blockader

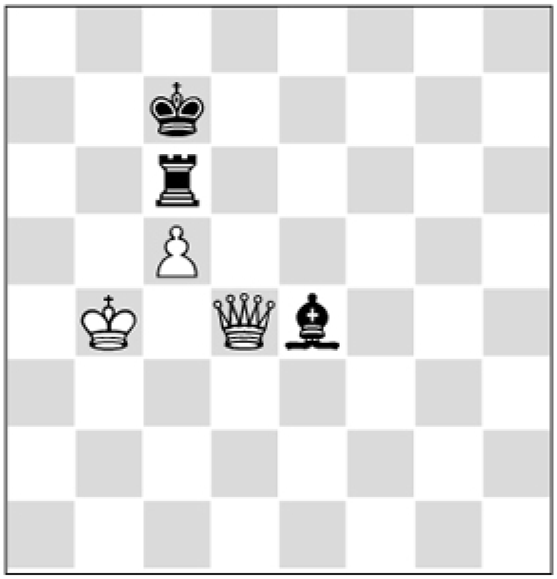
The blockader at d4 is in this position very elastic: he can undertake long journeys in all directions from d4.

So much for the subject of elasticity. We shall now analyse the actual effect of the blockade as such.

The blockade effect

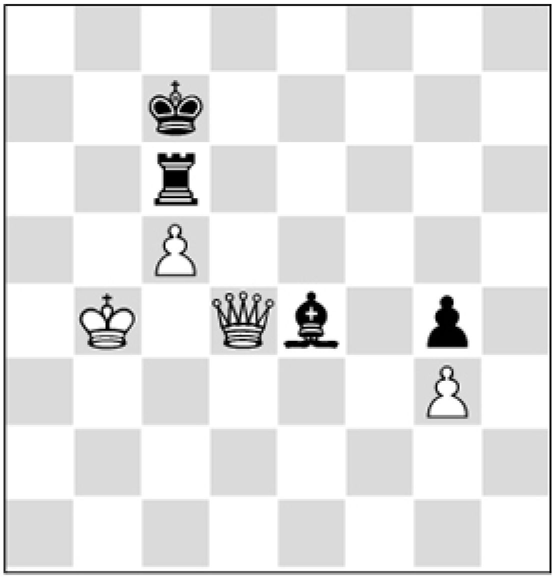
The force required for blockade should be developed systematically and with conscious intent, in contrast to elasticity, which often develops in and of itself. The blockading effect is enhanced by bringing up support troops, which, however, in their turn must be safely positioned. Compare Diagrams 154 and 155.

154



Black to move. Is the rook at c6 a strong blockader?

155



Black to move. Can the blockade maintain itself?

In Diagram 154, the bishop, for reasons of personal safety, will move over to g6, although in doing so the rook will lose an important support. Yet, the ‘vagabonding’ of this bishop on the long diagonal is a precarious thing, for the eyes of the law (the queen at d4) are watching!

After **1…♝g6** there follows **2.♚b5**, and now the attempt by **2…♝e8** to restore the abandoned strategic connection with c6, is forcefully refuted with **3.♛e5+ ♚d7 4.♛xe8+ ♚xe8 5.♚xc6**.

In Diagram 155, on the other hand, the bishop can go to f3, where it is securely placed and cannot be driven away. The rook gains in significance and a draw is inevitable.

We established a similar state of affairs in our study of outposts. The blockader, too, draws its power not from itself but, much more, from its strategic connection with the area behind it. A blockader that is only slightly or insufficiently protected will prove unable to hold its own against enemy pieces that are hotly pressing against it. It will be chased away or annihilated, whereupon the previously blockaded pawn will continue on its forward march.

The defender will find especially great value in the rules to be treated in Part II of this book concerning the over-protection of strategic points. The blockade square is as a rule a strategically important point, so it is one of wisdom’s precepts to cover this point more times than is strictly necessary. (So do not wait for attacks to pile up; rather, accumulate a store of protective force, just as before going to a ball one tends to lay up a store of sleep.)

A remarkable overall framework emerges from what we have just said, that whereas the effect of the blockade can be strengthened or even preserved only by a laborious process of bringing in more support troops, the secondary advantages of the blockader, such as elasticity and the threats that can be carried out from its post, have a quite powerful vital strength – that is, they unfold their capabilities without any particular strain (like the thistle on stony ground). This can be explained (1) by the state of affairs, as pointed out in (c) above, in which a protecting piece is able to take the place of the blockader that has gone on a journey; (2) by the fact, as discussed in Section 2b above, that the blockading square tends to become a weak point for the enemy. Maintaining contact with the strategically important point must, according to my system, work wonders. This will be treated in more detail in Part II, ‘Positional Play.’ But even at this point, the student might compare and examine, e.g., the fifth special case of the 7th rank under (c), in connection with the story of Svyatogor (see Chapter 3, ‘The Seventh and Eighth Ranks,’ Section 3).

To sum up, we offer the following general principle: it is clear – and is already so in our choice of the blockader – that we must always bear in mind the elasticity of the blockader and its ability to create threats. Yet it is often sufficient to strengthen the effect of the blockade per se, when elasticity and threats will not seldom appear in and of themselves.

The facts of the matter outlined here we regard as extraordinarily important. It must be clear by this point that a piece does not degrade itself when it answers the call to become a blockader, for the blockading post proves itself a most honorable one, safe, and yet granting the piece full initiative.

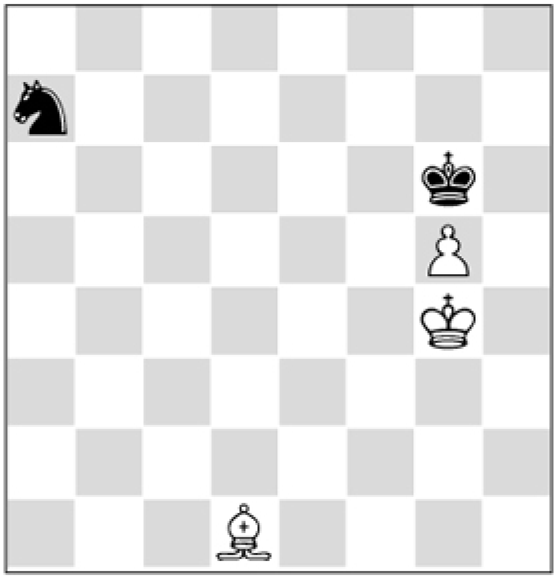
The student might at this point do a thorough test of the correctness of this observation by looking at available master games or his own games. He should compare the blockaders with one another, their respective advantages, their ultimate fates, and how they came to fail or succeed in their tasks – and he will derive more benefit from a thorough acquaintance with a single ‘actor’ than from a superficial chumminess with the whole ‘troupe.’ ‘It is in self-limitation that the master reveals himself!’ This fine saying also applies to the player who aspires to mastery, indeed to every earnestly minded student.

4. The fight against the blockader

His uprooting. ‘Changez les blockeurs’! How we replace a stand-offish blockader with one more affable!

When we said that the blockader draws its effective strength from its connection with the area behind it, this was an incontestable truth. And yet the blockader should also contribute something to the protection of the blockading rampart. It accomplishes this in that, thanks to its radius of attack, it inhibits the enemy troops from approaching it. It would also be a virtue if its parentage were humble – the humbler the better. By this we mean that a blockader must have a thick hide. The somewhat exaggerated sensitiveness exhibited by the king or queen would be very ill-suited to the role of blockader. The minor pieces (knight or bishop) can hold out against an attack – they can call up additional protection if need be – whereas the queen tends to react to even the mildest attack by departing the scene ‘with her head held high.’ The king is generally a poor blockader, although in the endgame phase his ability to change the color of his square stands him in good stead, so that if he is driven away from a dark-square blockade point he can try to establish himself, at the next stage, on a light blockade-point. For example, Diagram 156.

156



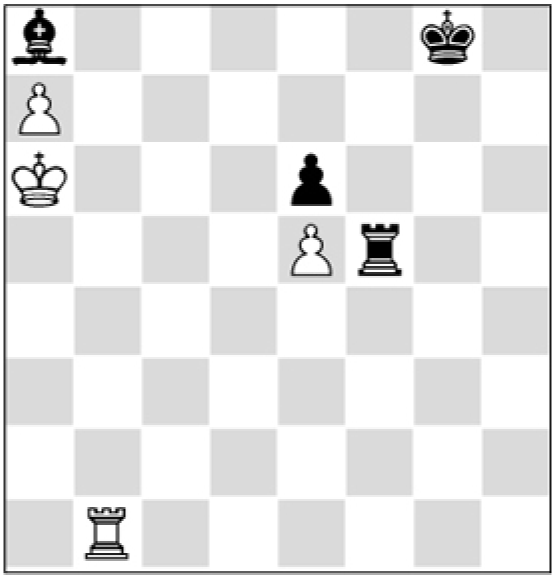
Change of blockade square

The check **1.♗c2+** drives the king from g6, but now he takes up the blockade from g7.

Since therefore the blockader, as we have seen, can be of varying quality (strong and weak, elastic and inelastic), the obvious thing is to replace one blockader with another if need be. If I capture a blockader, the recapturing piece assumes the role of blockader and with that the command ‘Changez les blockeurs!’ become a fait accompli, or, in plain English, a change of ministers in a foreign land would be an accomplished fact.

This combination is typical. See Diagram 157.

157



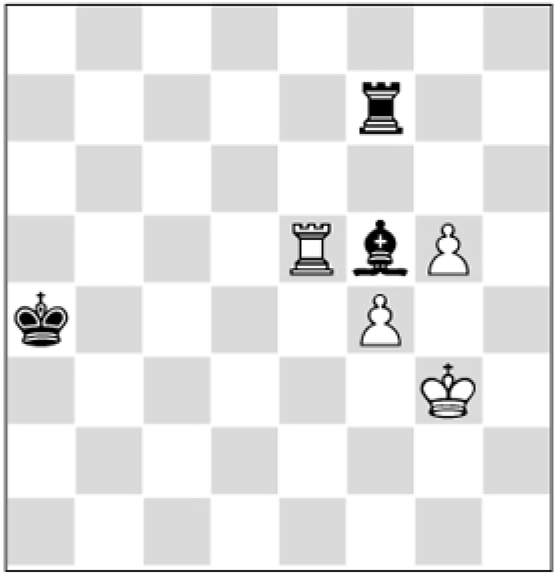
From one of my games. The blockader at a8 is replaced by the black rook

The initial moves would be **1.♜b8+ ♜f8**, and now the attacking radius of the bishop on a8 makes difficult the otherwise decisive approach of the white king. There follows, however, **2.♜xa8 ♜xa8 3.♚b7**. The new blockader, the rook on a8, reveals himself to be an affable fellow, and nothing is farther from his mind than to turn back an attempt to approach him: **3…♜f8 4.a8♕ ♜xa8 5.♚xa8**. The pawn ending is untenable for Black because (cf. Diagram 165) his e-pawn will be outflanked: **5…♚g7 6.♚b7 ♚g6 7.♚c6 ♚g5 8.♚d7! ♚f5 9.♚d6** and wins.

On the other hand, **1.♜b8+ ♜f8 2.♚b6?** (instead of 2.♖xa8) **2…♝d5 3.♚c7 ♚f7 4.♜xf8+ ♚xf8 5.♚b8** would fail, and indeed because of **5…♚f7 6.a8♕ ♝xa8 7.♚xa8 ♚g6**, when Black wins.

In Diagram 158 Black would be securely placed were it not for his king being so far away.

158



Changez les blockeurs!

White induces his opponent to replace the discomfiting f5-bishop (which prevents the white king from approaching) with the more accommodating rook. Therefore **1.♜xf5 ♜xf5 2.♚g4**, when the black king comes too late: **2…♜f8 3.g6 ♚b5 5.f5 ♚c6 6.f6 ♚d6 7.♚f5** (foiling 7…♔e6) and wins.

The idea is this: the attacker is willing to talk with the enemy blockade-society, but first he wishes to replace the for-some-reason unsympathetic spokesman for the aforementioned society with someone else. Once that has happened, the negotiations may begin!

The ‘negotiations’, or the uprooting

How are these ‘negotiations’ to be carried out? Well, we concentrate as many attacks as possible against said blockader, who in turn will of course call up reserve troops (protective pieces) in support. In this fight flaring up around the blockade we seek (by the well-known pattern) to amass a preponderance of force, and this through eliminating defenders by trading them off, chasing them away, or otherwise keeping them occupied. In the end the blockader will have to retire, and our pawn can proceed.

This transfer of attacking fury from the blockading piece itself to its protecting pieces is by the way a well-known stratagem, one that we have already had occasion to become familiar with in the case of the open file.

In the endgame we usually drive away the supports of the blockade, while in the middlegame the usual practice is to keep them busy.

A very instructive example along these lines is offered by my game vs. Von Gottschall, July 1925.

Aron Nimzowitsch
Herman von Gottschall
Breslau 1925
Queen’s Pawn Game

1.♘f3 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e3 ♘f6 4.b3 ♘bd7

Correct was 4…c5 and …♘c6.

5.♗d3 c6 6.0-0 ♗d6 7.♗b2 ♕c7

To play …e6-e5, opening the position. To prevent this, White undertakes a counter-attack.

8.c4 b6

On 8…e5 there would follow 9.cxd5 ♘xd5! (not 9…cxd5, when after 10.dxe5 the d-pawn would remain isolated) 10.♘c3, White having the freer position.

9.♘c3 ♗b7 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e4 White opens all the lines!

12…dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 0-0 15.d5 c5

Now both bishops have open diagonals against the enemy kingside. Impressed by this, the second player is inclined to give slight regard to the fact that the d-pawn is now passed (indeed, he seems to overlook the fact altogether). And, indeed, what possible role could this pawn, most carefully blockaded (and with a reserve blockader already standing on d7!), play in the further course of the game? But matters turn out quite differently.

16.♖e1 ♕d8 17.♗b1

This attack leads to the interesting result that the blockading bishop on d6 and knight on d7 are either diverted or destroyed.

17…♖e8 18.♕d3

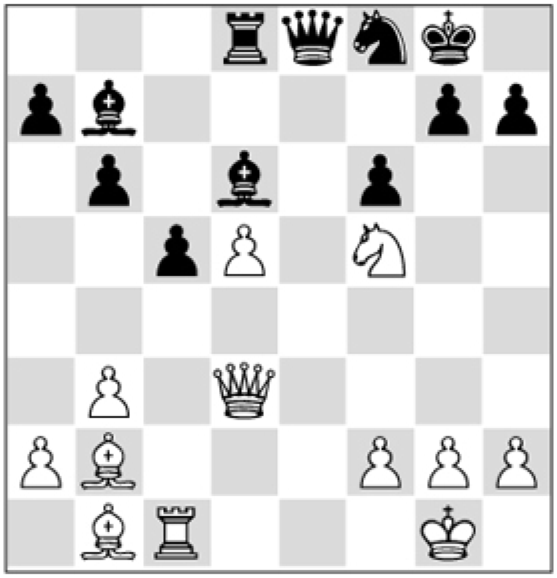
Even more precise was, first, the exchange 18.♖xe8+.

18…♘f8

Better was 18…♖xe1+.

19.♖xe8! ♕xe8 20.♘h4! f6 21.♘f5 ♖d8

159



Black is on the verge of showing up the weakness of the d5-pawn, but now he is awakened from his dream by the brilliance of a sacrifice.

22.♗xf6! ♗xh2+!

In order not to lose a pawn Black has to accede to the indirect exchange of his bishop for White’s bishop.

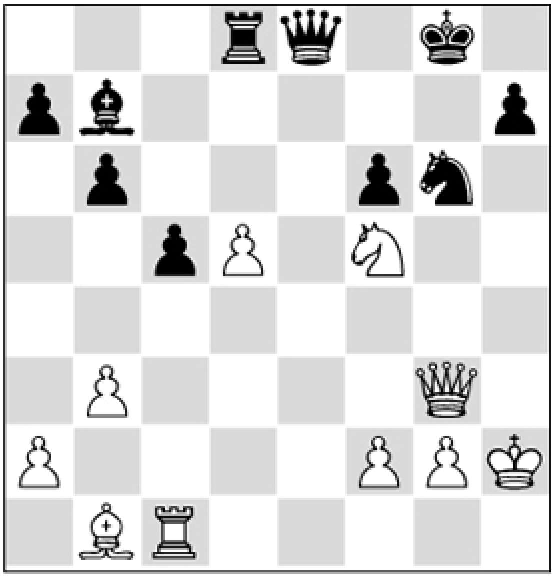
If 22…gxf6?, then 23.♘xd6 ♖xd6 24.♕g3+.

23.♔xh2 gxf6

What a change – the bishop on d6 has disappeared and Mr. Reserve Blockader (the knight at d7) will soon land… on g6! The d-pawn is therefore passed!!

24.♕g3+ ♘g6

160



25.f4!

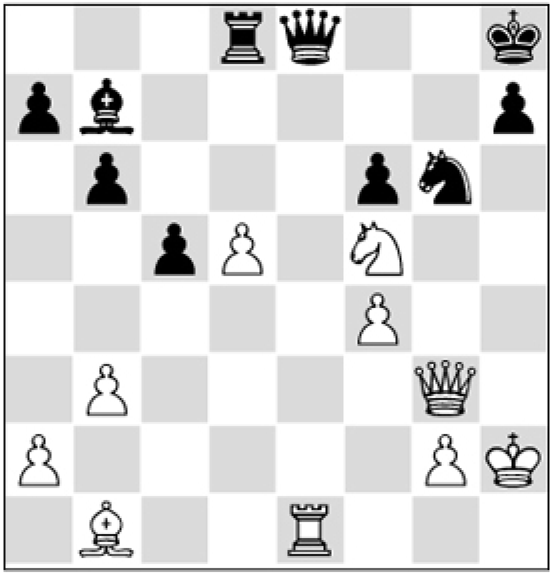
Enabling ♖e1; the passed pawn is indirectly protected.

25…♚h8

Not 25…♗xd5 or 25…♖xd5 because of 26.♖e1 followed by ♘e7+, etc.

26.♜e1

161



26…♛f8!

On 26…♕g8 the passed pawn would have come into its own in a very interesting way: 27.♘e7 ♘xe7 28♖xe7 (7th rank) 28…♕xg3+

29.♔xg3 ♖g8+ 30.♔f2 ♖g7.
Apparently the 7th rank is now neutralized, but now the passed pawn gets the word: 31.d6 ♖xe7 32.dxe7 ♗c6 33.♗e4 ♗e8 34.f5!! ♔g7 35.♗d5, and now the pawn at e7 is unassailable: 35…♔h6 36.♔f3 ♔g5 37.♔e4, when Black is powerless against the threat ♗b7, ♔d5, and ♗c6, destroying the blockader.

27.d6! ♜d7

Why not 27…♗c8? Would this not have led to the win of the passed pawn? No, for after this move White would have played 28.♘e7 (by playing d5-d6 White created an outpost point at e7) 29.♔g1 ♘xf4 and now 30.♘xc8 ♖xc8 31.d7 and wins.

28.♛c3

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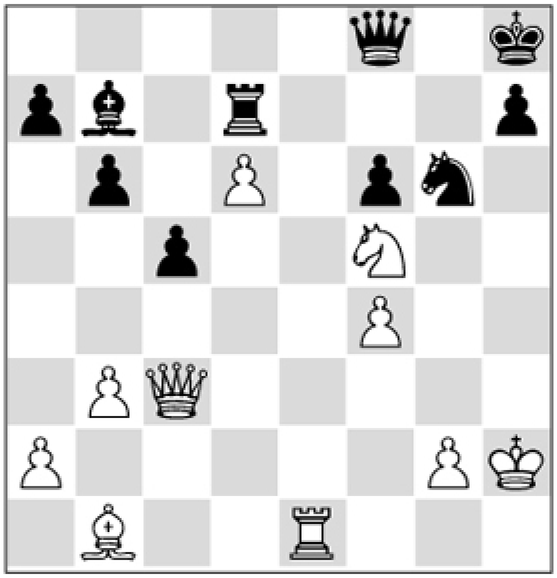


Threatening 29.♖e8! ♕xe8 30.♕xf6+ ♔g8 31.♘h6#.
So the 8th rank has to be secured by retreating with …♖d8. But then the 7th rank would be defenseless and White would win with ♖e7.
Note that the winning moves ♖e7 and ♘e7 (in the previous note) are to be understood as a direct consequence of the passed pawn’s advance.

28…♜xd6

A desperate expedient. On 28…♖f7, 29.d7! ♖xd7 30.♖e8! would have decided at once.

29.♞xd6 ♛xd6 30.♝xg6 hxg6 31.♜e8+ ♚g7 32.♛g3

And White won:

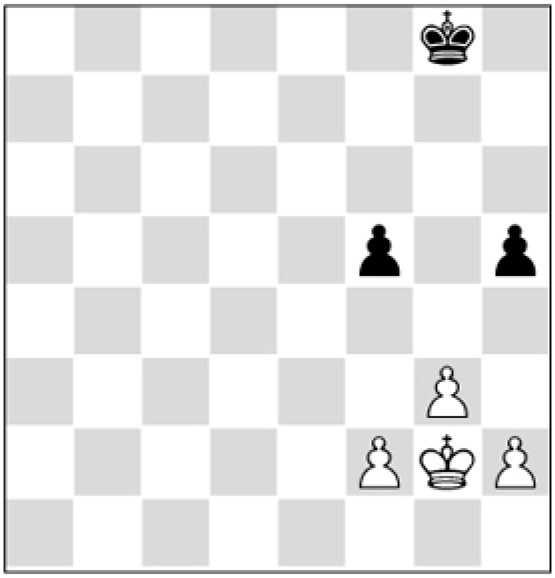
> **32…♝c6 33.♜e3 ♝d7 34.f5 ♛xg3+ 35.♚xg3 ♝xf5 36.♜e7+ ♚h6 37.♜xa7 ♝b1 38.♜a6 b5 39.a4 bxa4 40.bxa4 ♚g5 41.♜b6 ♝e4 42.a5 f5 43.a6 c4 44.a7 c3 45.♜b3 f4+ 46.♚f2 c2 47.♜c3**

And Black resigned.

5. The frontal attack against an isolated pawn as a kingly ideal! Outflanking. The role of leader. The three-part maneuver, comprised of frontal attack, the opponent’s forced withdrawal, and the final outflanking movement. The ‘reserve blockading square.’ The abolished ‘opposition.

Many a gray-haired hero will shake their heads at this: what, now the opposition is to be abolished too!! Yes, I am sorry, but I am unable to spare you this pain. The opposition is, as far as the level of its understanding is concerned, closely related to the ‘arithmetically’ understood center. In both cases the inner situation tends to get judged by purely external criteria! (By way of orientation: conceiving the center in arithmetic terms means counting the pawns standing there and considering that a majority signifies a preponderance – a completely untenable conception. In reality it is the greater or lesser degree of mobility that is decisive in judging the central situation.) In what follows I shall present my entirely new theory, which, in eliminating the ‘opposition,’ analyses the inner meaning of events. Thus I will establish a number of basic principles which should be welcomed by the student.

163

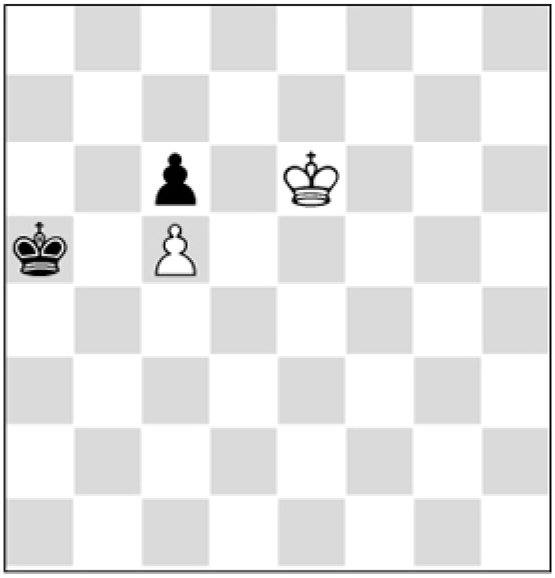


White wins one of the enemy pawns

In Diagram 163, the creation of a passed pawn by h2-h3, f2-f3, and g3-g4 would not be sufficient to win, for the white king would remain behind his passed pawn. The king in this position should play the role of leader, more or less like a pace-setter in a bicycle race, and not just comfortably sit at home reading the reports from the scene of the action.

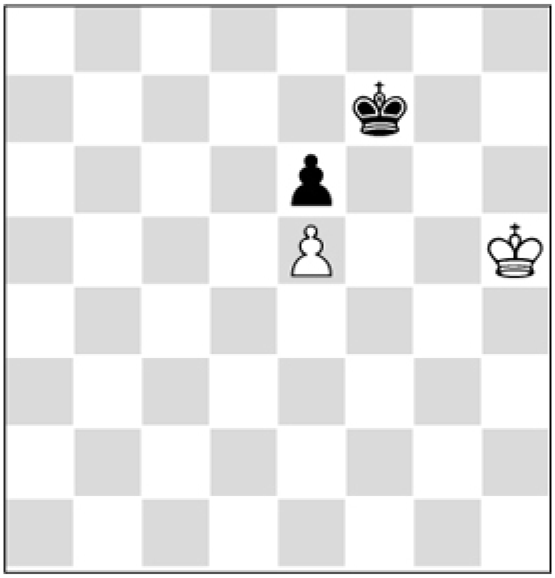
The student, incidentally, must be completely clear on one point: the king in the middlegame and the king in the endgame are two fundamentally different entities. In the middlegame the king is fearful, entrenching himself in his fortress (castled position) and in need of comforting. Only when he is in contact with his rooks, and his knights and bishops are gathering around him lovingly, then and only then does the old king feel reasonably hale and hearty. In the endgame, in contrast, the king becomes a ‘hero’ (not all that difficult, since the board has been almost entirely swept clean of enemy pieces). Scarcely has the endgame phase begun than he leaves his castled enclave and proceeds slowly, but with imposing steps, to the center (clearly, to get involved in the ‘middle of the action’ – more on this in Chapter 6). He shows particular courage in the struggle against… an isolated pawn. The fight is initiated by a frontal attack, such as with a white king on, say, f4 and a black pawn on f5. This frontal position is an ideal one that we have in mind for the king, and in fact it is very desirable, for, given the requisite material, it is a placement that can be achieved, thus helping to win the pawn under attack – or which, in a pure pawn ending, may lead to an eventual outflanking maneuver (Diagrams 164 and 165).

164



White, himself threatened with an outflanking maneuver, outflanks his opponent and wins the object of contention, the c6-pawn. How?

165

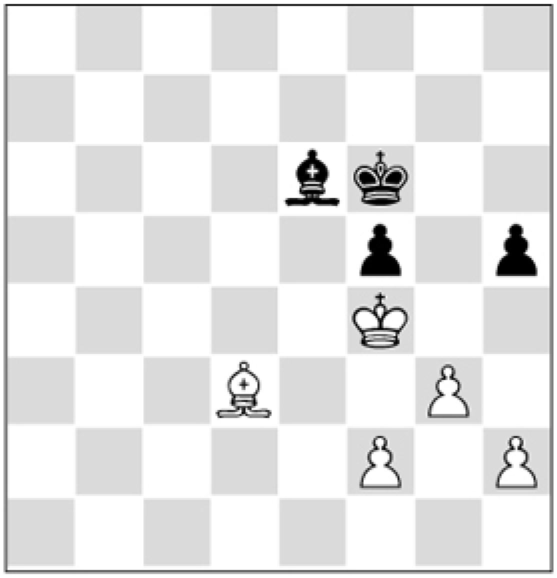


White ‘outflanks’ his opponent

So, if there are pieces still on the board, the black pawn on f5 that is blocked by the enemy king will be subject to multiple attacks, a fact that may lead to uncomfortable defensive positions for Black’s other pieces; while if there are bare kings on the board (no pieces left), zugzwang proves a useful weapon.

Example: Referring to Diagram 163, let us place a white bishop on f1 and a black one at f7. After **1.♚f3 ♚g7 2.♚f4** (the ideal position) **2..♚f6**, there follows **3.♗d3 ♗e6** (Diagram 166), when the difference in value between the active bishop on d3 and the passive black one, which is fettered to the f5-pawn, weighs significantly in the balance. (See Chapter 6, Section 2.)

166



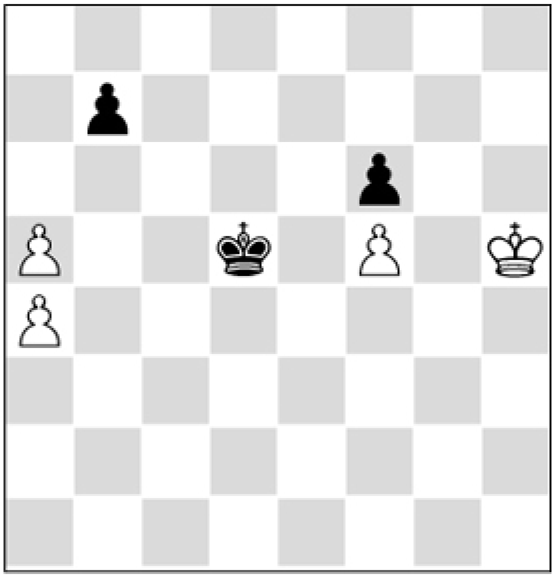
The active d3-bishop and the passive black bishop on e6, tied to the f5-pawn

The pure pawn ending, on the other hand, would proceed as follows (see Diagram 163): **1.♚f3 ♚g7 2.♚f4 ♚f6 3.h4** This is the ‘first stage’ of the maneuver. Then **3…♚g6**, when we have the ‘second stage’ of the maneuver, where the enemy king must willy-nilly go to one side, a consequence of the zugzwang. And now there follows the ‘third and last stage,’ the outflanking by the white king with **4.♚e5**, winning. The frontal attack therefore developed into an outflanking, enveloping maneuver, an indication of progress – for an outflanking maneuver is, as we know, the strongest form of attack (in ascending order of strength: frontal, lateral, and outflanking-enveloping).

That the outflanking maneuver is very strong in the endgame is made convincing by the examples in Diagrams 164 and 165. In the latter there follows **1.♚h6 ♚f8 2.♚g6 ♚e7 3.♚g7 ♚e8 4.♚f6 ♚d7 5.♚f7**. We note the spiral-like approach of the white king, who works with zugzwang to effect his advance. In Diagram 164 the play is **1.♚d7! ♚b5 2.♚d6**; just not 1.♔d6? because of 1…♔b5, when White is in zugzwang himself and has no good move.

Or, lastly, the position in Diagram 167:

167



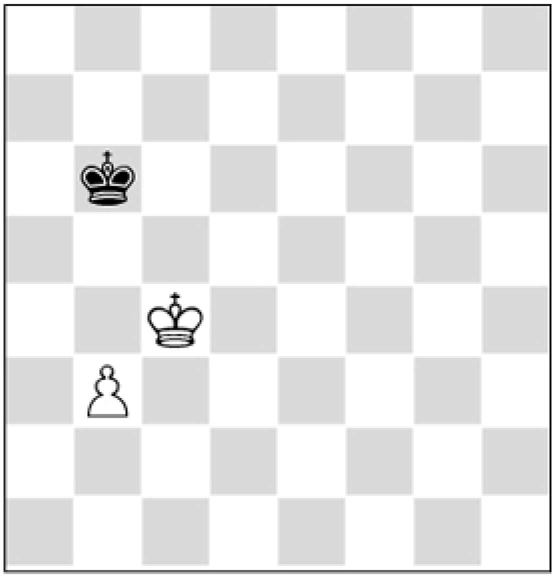
White is on the move, and wins

The play goes **1.♚g6 ♚e5 2.a6! bxa6 3.a5**. White gives up a pawn to shift onto his opponent the obligation of having to move.

So now that we have seen the significance of the outflanking maneuver (which is effective only in relation to an immovable object – which, in turn, limits the mobility of its own king!), we are now in a position to understand why we went to such trouble, in carrying out this three-part maneuver, to bring off this outflanking attack.

We now turn our attention to the three-part maneuver in the case of a position without an enemy pawn (Diagram 168).

168

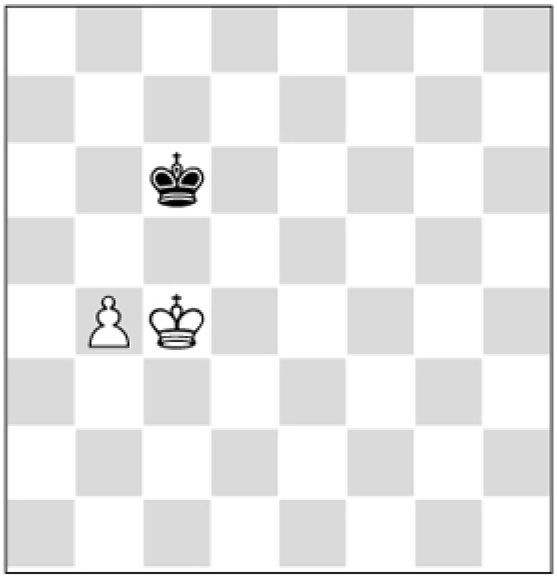


White takes over the b5-square as a station for his own king

The issue here is the win of the point b5 for the king. Why precisely this point? Because the position of the white king on b5 would ensure the advance of the passed pawn as far as b6; for if the king is stationed on b5 he only has to move to one side, say, with ♔c5, when the b-pawn, which we imagine already to have advanced to b4, will without fail reach b6. In Diagram 168, however, the b6-square is the first unsupported leg on the pawn’s journey to the queening square, for the squares b4 and b5 are already completely safeguarded by the king at c4. We therefore institute a frontal attack against b5: **1.♔b4** The first stage. **1…♔a6** Or 1…♔c6 – this forced withdrawal of the king is the ‘second stage.’ **2.♔c5** Or 2.♔a5. The ‘third stage,’ the flanking movement completed; and now, just as he had wished, the king reaches b5 – e.g., **2…♔b7 3.♔b5!** In the position now reached, 3.♔b5 is already to be understood as a frontal attack on the next square for the pawn (b6). The three-part maneuver, directed against b6, then runs along a course that is entirely analogous to what we have just shown, namely: **3…♔a7** Or 3…♔c7. **4.♔c6** (or 4.♔a6), with ♔b6 to follow.

Still simpler is the application of this way of thinking to the defense. In the position with the white king on c4 and a pawn on b4, and the black king on c6 (Diagram 169), Black must be able to draw, for the white king has lagged behind.

169



White to move; Black holds the draw

All that Black would need to do here is look to see that the white king does not assume the role of leader, and, secondly, to bear in mind that after the blockading point his safest position is the reserve blockading point. (With a pawn on b4, our blockading point is b5; the reserve blockading point is at b6, hence immediately behind the blockade square.)

In the position above, Black answers **1.b5+** with **1…♚b6** (blockade) **2.♚b4 ♚b7** (reserve blockade) **3.♚c5 ♚c7** (just not 3…♔b8 or 3…♔c8, for that would permit the advance of the enemy king) **4.b6+ ♚b7** (blockade) **5.♚b5 ♚b8** (reserve blockade) **6.♚c6 ♚c8 7.b7+ ♚b8 8.♚b6**, stalemate.

To avoid any misunderstanding, we must emphatically stress that the point at b8 is a reserve square only in the case of a white pawn that has advanced to b6, and b7 is the reserve square in the case of a white pawn at b5, etcetera.

In the position with White’s king at c5 and his pawn at b5 and the black king at b7, 1…♔b8? would be a terrible move, for this would cede the whole of the terrain to his opponent and give him the opportunity to assume the role of leader. Thus: on 1…♔b8? White plays 2.♔b6, with a decisive frontal attack against the b7-square (our three-part maneuver!).

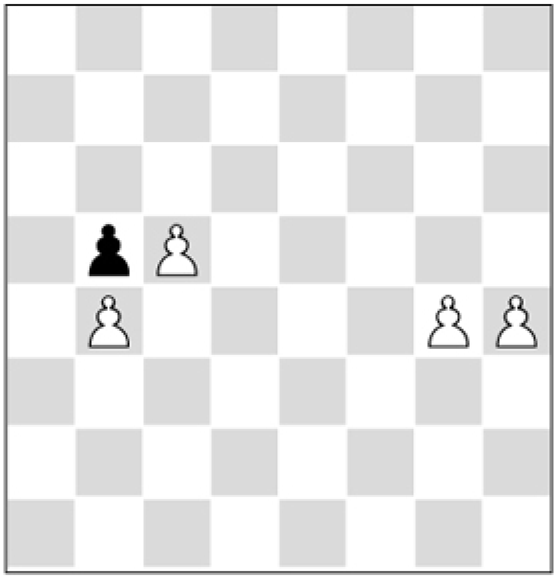
This theory of the opposition, with its lack of clarity, is to be spoken of as the purest obscurantism, while the truth is so utterly clear: the attacking king fights to take the lead, the opposing king resists this by making use of the ‘reserve blockade point’.

6. Privileged passed pawns: (a) two connected pawns; (b) the protected passed pawn; (c) the distant passed pawn. The king as ‘hole-filler.’ On preparations for the king’s journey. The beginner chasing a passed pawn that cannot be stopped.

As in life, so on the chessboard, the goods of this world are not altogether equally divided. So for example there are passed pawns that have a far greater impact on the game than other, ordinary passed pawns. Such ‘privileged’ passed pawns deserve the highest regard on the part of the student, who should nearly always avail himself of the opportunity to create a ‘privileged’ passed pawn for himself. In what follows we shall try to explain the effect of such a pawn by examining its characteristic qualities. From this survey, rules will naturally arise in consequence, the pros and cons in the fight against the terrible lads just mentioned.

The typical ideal position of two connected passed pawns is shown in Diagram 170.

170



The c-pawn is a protected passed pawn. The g- and h-pawns are two ‘connected’ passed pawns in the ideal position

The relations between the ‘connected pawns’ are imbued with the truest comradeship, hence the position where the two pawns are on the same rank is to be regarded as the most natural. The power of such pawns lies in the impossibility of blockading them (for the pawns at h4 and g4 exclude the possibility of a blockade on the squares h5 and g5). Nevertheless, the further course of events will cause the connected passed pawns to give up their ideal position, for although they may be doing quite fine and noble work on g4 and h4, the lust to expand – which as with every other passed pawn is characteristic of such pawns to a high degree – will drive them forward. And as soon as one of them moves, the possibility exists for blockading them, for example, after h4-h5 a black piece can blockade them on g5 or h6. From this observation, coupled with the consideration that the connected passed pawns at g4 and h4 can have no fonder wish than to advance as a pair to h5 and g5, we have the following rules:

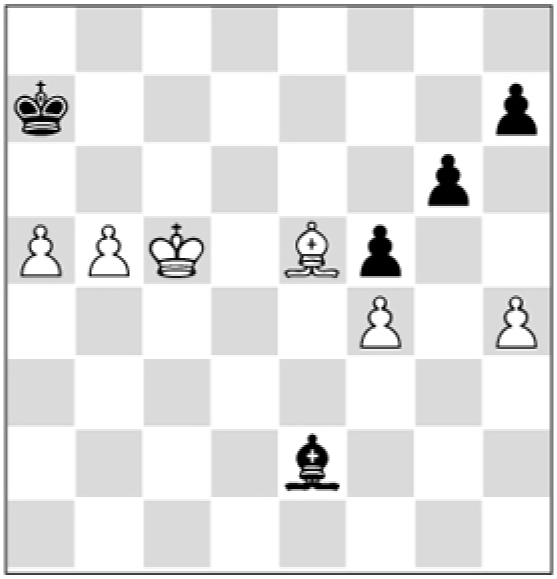
RULE: **The advance of a passed pawn from the ideal position must take place only at that moment when a strong blockade on the part of the opponent need not be feared, as it cannot be carried out.**
And further: if the correct pawn has advanced at the right moment, any blockade that may be put in place will be weak and overcome with little

trouble; the pawn that was left behind will then move up and the ideal position will again be reached!

Accordingly (see the right-hand portion of Diagram 170): at the right moment the correct pawn, let’s say the g-pawn, will advance, a move that affords the opponent a chance to set up a blockade at h5. The blockading piece, which clearly was poorly supported – hence the expression ‘weak blockade’ – will be driven off, and the move h4-h5 will again make the position (with the pawns at g5 and h5) an ideal one. The white king can render important help to this advance by stepping into the breach created by the advance of the first pawn. Hence, in Diagram 170 (meanwhile inserting a black knight at f6), g4-g5 ♘h5, whereupon the white king (assumed to be at the ready) now slips into g4 and fills the gap. The maneuver described here we call ‘filling the hole.’ Hence ‘my’ king need not fear that he will be out of work, for in the worst case he can apply for a position as a dentist somewhere in his country and – fill the cavities among the foot soldiers!

Diagram 171 occurred in a game in 1921 in a club in Stockholm.

171



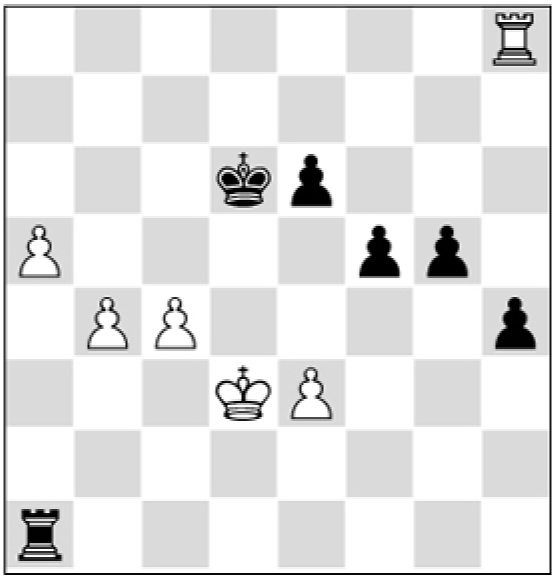
White played **1.b6+?**, permitting the absolute blockade with **1…♚b7** – absolute because the king at b7, by the nature of things, can never be driven away. There followed **2.♚d6**, the white king strolling over to g7 and feasting on the h7-pawn. At this moment, however, Black played …♗h5, when White’s kingside meal came to an end. Ruefully, His

Majesty wandered over to the other wing, but here too, there was no longer anything for him in the position, for the black bishop, now freed from its duties protecting the kingside pawns, makes the board unsafe for him. The first player was overtaken by a just punishment for proceeding against the rules.

Correct was **1.a6 ♝d3 2.♝d4 ♝f1 3.♚b4+!** (looking to fill the hole at a5!) **3…♚a8 4.♚a5 ♝e2 5.b6**. Everything according to plan: the a-pawn advances first because the hindrance (‘blockade’ would almost be saying too much) posed by Black can easily be removed. The king fills the gap caused by the advance; the b-pawn moves next, and the two good comrades are again united!

‘I had a comrade’ – the two united passed pawns provide a fine illustration of this fine song. ‘Perfectly in step with one another…’ Only seldom, and then only if the pawns are far advanced, due to their excessive exuberance, may it happen that one of the pawns will go forward on its own, ruthlessly sacrificing its comrade in the process (see Diagram 172)

172



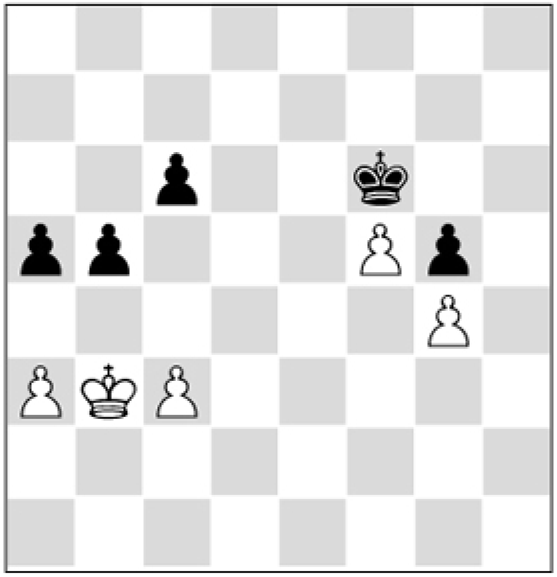
Perlis-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1911

Black to move. The pawn at g5 shamefully leaves its comrade on h4 in the lurch! Yes, when a pawn feels so exuberant it leaves its comrade behind!

1…g4! 2.♖xh4 g3 and wins

We now turn to the protected passed pawn. The difference in value between a protected and an ordinary passed pawn is clearly seen in the next example (Diagram 173).

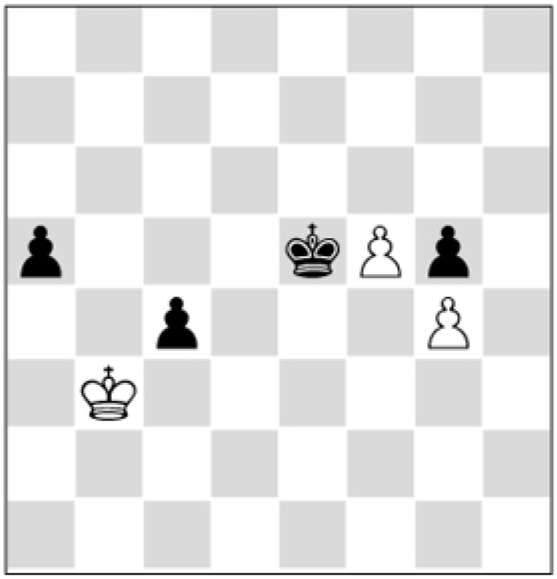
173



White wins by means of the difference in value between a ‘protected’ and an ordinary passed pawn

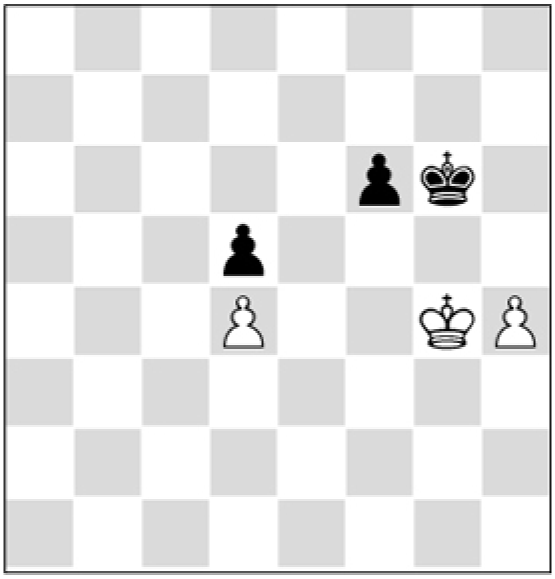
White opens fire on the black pawn majority: **1.a4 ♚e5 2.axb5** 2.c4 would be wrong because of 2…b4, with a protected passed pawn at b4. The two kings would then have the scarcely enjoyable duty of walking back and forth, keeping track of the pawns. Walking back and forth and keeping an eye on the peasants – if a king does this, we call it reigning! **2…cxb5 3.c4 bxc4+** (forced: 3…b4 is no help, as the white pawns would go on to queen), and now a position characteristic of the aforementioned difference in value has arisen (Diagram 174).

174



Here we see that the white king can consume the black pawns one after another without any difficulty, whereas, in contrast, the immunity of the ‘protected’ f5-pawn from attacks by Black’s king is brilliantly manifest. To be sure, we have seen the less-experienced player, ignoring the immunity and, with a smile and a chuckle (in this position: Black, with his king on e5 and a pawn on g5; White with his king on a1 and pawns on g4 and f5) and in a lust for battle goes after the g-pawn. After …♚e5-f4, f5-f6 he realizes his error and in all seriousness (!!) begins to chase after the speeding pawn. The last scene of the comedy runs as follows: **1…♚f4 2.f6 ♚e5!! 3.f7 ♚e6!! 4.f8**♕ Resigns. We formulate the situation thus: the strength of a protected passed pawn lies in its immunity to attack by the enemy king.

175

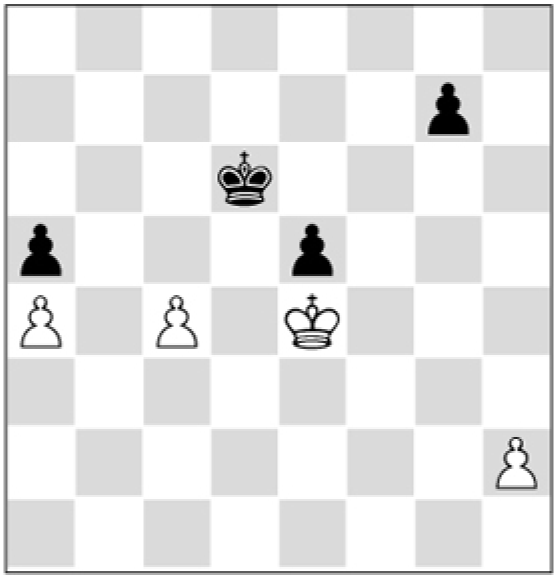


The ‘remoter’ passed pawn, whose capture lures the enemy king away from the center of the board

In Diagram 175, the h-pawn is the ‘remoter’ passed pawn, that is, the more distant from the center of the board. After the indirect exchange of both passed pawns for each other, that is, after **1.h5+ ♚h6 2.♚f5 ♚xh5 3.♚xf6**, the black king is out of the game, whereas the white king is well developed due to its central position. And this fact is decisive. The remoter passed pawn is therefore a trump card, full of diversionary power, but, like any other trump card, must be held in reserve and not played too early, as our rule stipulates. The diversionary pawn exchange is merely preliminary to the king journey that follows (cf. Diagram 175). This journey, however, should already have been carefully prepared before the ensuing pawn advance.

Look at the position in Diagram 176.

176



The ‘remoter’ passed pawn

White has the remoter passed pawn at c4. The immediate forward march of this pawn would however be a mistake, for after **1.c5+ ♚xc5 2.♚xe5** the journey to g7 would be time-consuming and its traveling companion at h2 too dilatory. Correct is **1.h4**. The traveling companion reports himself! Black responds with **1…g6**. For this accommodating advance we have zugzwang to thank, a motif that, especially in the case of the ‘remoter passed pawn’, must be applied with skill. There now follows **2.c5+! ♚xc5 3.♚xe5 ♚b4**, when Black comes a move too late: **4.♚f6 ♚xa4 5.♚xg6 ♚b3 6.h5 a4 7.h6**, etc.

RULE: **The intended king journey must be carefully prepared before the ensuing diversionary sacrifice (or exchange). When possible, zugzwang should be used. Advance the fellow-traveler! Entice the impediments to its journey (the enemy pawns on the wing to which the king will journey) to advance! All this must be carried out prior to the diversionary move!** (Cf. Example 3, Diagram 184.)

7. When a passed pawn should advance: a) on its own account; b) to win territory for the king that is following behind (filling the holes); c) to offer himself as a sacrifice

for the sake of diversion. Concerning the measure of the distance between the enemy king and the pawn that is being sacrificed. The appetite-whetting king maneuver. On the youth who moved out of the house to win a place in the world for himself.

‘It is an old story, but one that remains eternally new.’ The less-experienced player lets his passed pawn advance at a moment when it may be least suitable for it. With two connected passed pawns (Diagram 171) he plays, for example, 1.b6+? and in so doing permits a tremendous blockade to be set up. It may therefore be of practical value to record those instances where the pawn advance is indicated.

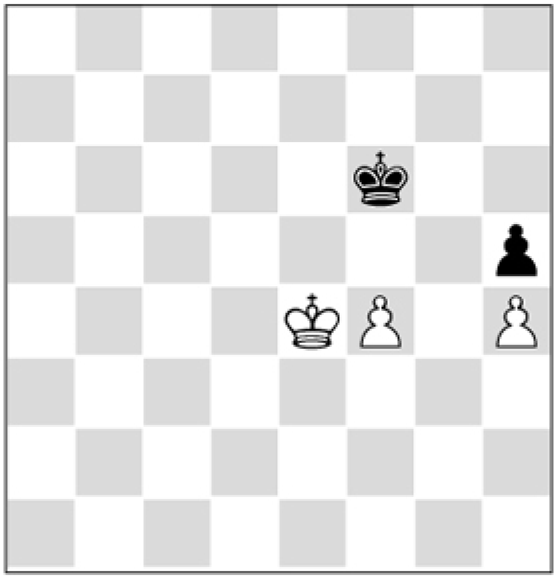
When is a passed pawn ready to march?

We distinguish three cases:

(a) When this advance brings the passed pawn closer to its goal (which will be true only when the blockade is weak), or when the advanced passed pawn increases in value in that it now helps protect important points (see my game vs. Von Gottschall in Section 4; in that game, the advance d5-d6 helped protect the e7-square in preparation for ♘e7 or ♖e7). On the other hand, it is wrong to push a passed pawn when it can become hopelessly blockaded and at the same time protects only squares that have no real value. It is a simple matter to bring a passed pawn into this world, but it is much more difficult to provide for its future.

(b) When the advancing passed pawn leaves behind it a square that can now be occupied by a piece, in particular giving its own king the opportunity to advance against a new enemy pawn (see Diagram 177).

177

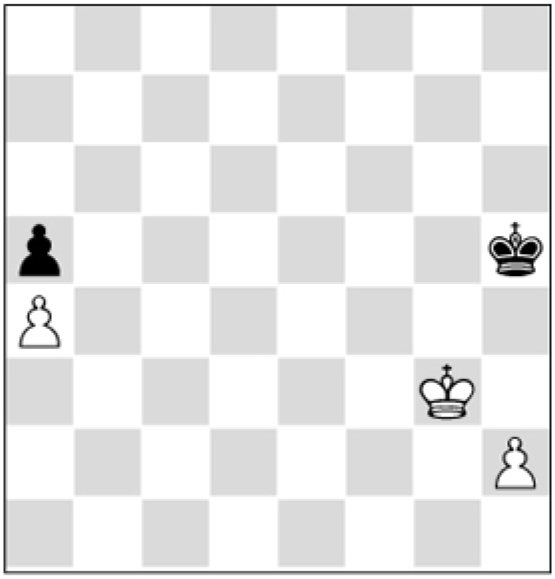


The forward march of the f-pawn for the sake of the king who follows behind

There follows: **1.f5 ♚f7 2.♚e5 ♚e7 3.f6+ ♚f7 4.♚f5 ♚f8!** The f-pawn in and of itself has no future: **5.♚g6!**, winning the h-pawn. Thus the forward march was made solely for the purpose of driving back the black king, so that his own king could draw close to h5!

(c) The advance is made for the purpose of sacrificing the pawn, so that the enemy king is decisively diverted from the scene (see Diagram 175). Another example would be the position in Diagram 178. Here the h-pawn is to die as a ‘diversionary sacrifice’ for the fatherland. The only question is how, and in particular, where?

178

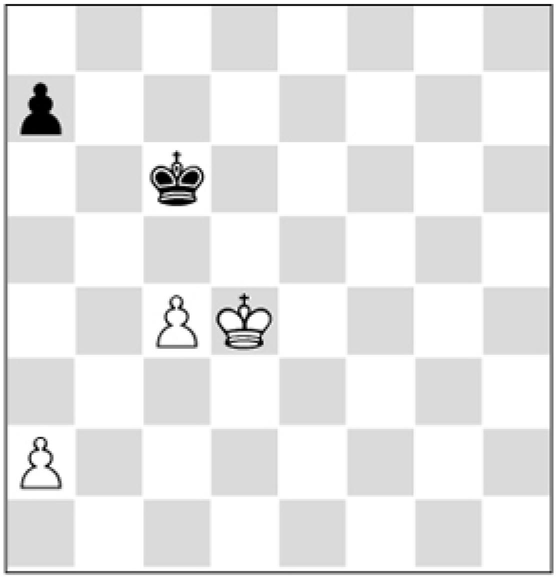


The h-pawn as a ‘diversionary sacrifice’

Since the diversionary effect increases with the distance between the pawn to be sacrificed and the enemy king, it would not be expedient to let the h-pawn advance, for the aforementioned distance would be decreased. The correct play is instead to bring one’s king over to the other wing without delay, hence 1.♔f4 ♔h4 2.♔e5 ♔h3 3.♔d6, etc. Quite poor, on the other hand, would be 1.h4??. It is not enough that he is willing to sacrifice the pawn – he serves it up on a platter! This is in truth an excess of politeness! After 1.h4?? there follows 1…♔g6 2.♔f4 ♔h5 3.♔e5 ♔xh4 4.♔d5 ♔g5 5.♔c4 ♔f5 6.♔b5 ♔e6 7.♔xa5 ♔d7 8.♔b6 (threatening 9.♔b7) 8…♔c8 9.♔a7 ♔c7, shutting in the white king and drawing. After 1.♔f4! ♔h4 2.♔e5 ♔h3 the black king may console himself that the march from h5 to h3 has whetted his appetite, so that the h2-pawn provides a nice little lunch taken after such a strenuous tour! However, the student should take this to heart: the decoy-pawn will give up its life, certainly, but in a way that causes the opponent to lose as much time as possible.

It is by no means always easy to recognize the motives of a pawn advance. See Diagram 179.

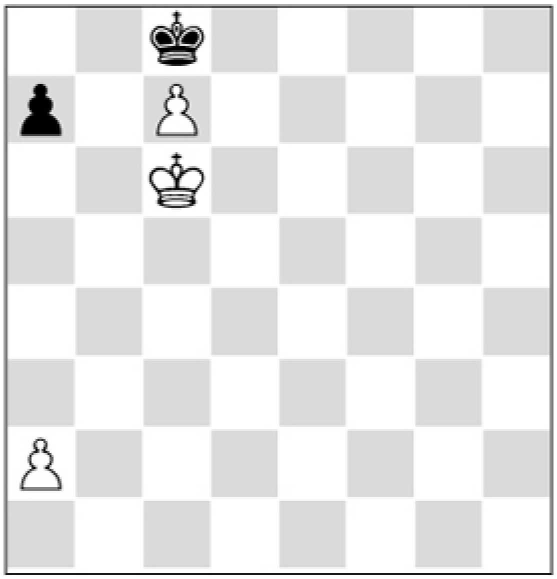
179



The spiritualist séance

Play proceeds: **1.c5 ♚c7 2.♚d5 ♚d7 3.c6+ ♚c7 4.♚c5 ♚c8** (the reserve blockade) **5.♚d6 ♚d8 6.c7+ ♚c8 7.♚c6** (Diagram 180).

180



The advance of the pawn seems to have been ill motivated, as none of the cases (a), (b), or (c) discussed above would appear to be applicable. There follows 7…a5. Black is now in zugzwang and has to send his pawn forward, which is the opening act of an exciting drama. The black a-pawn does a double-step, he storms forward full of energy and youthful arrogance. We however choose the gentle 8.a3 as our answer, to show our youthful opponent that calmness is also a most worthy trait. After 8…a4 9.♔d6 the game is decided. Suppose now that our young friend (the a7-pawn) is recalled and apologizes and tries the more modest ‘one-step’ **7…a6**. But now we show the luckless lad that energy is also a trump card and play 8.a4. After 8…a5 9.♔d6 Black again loses.

The idea was this: the stalemating of Black’s king forces the advance of his a-pawn, which White knows how to meet in such a way that after this pawn has run its course he will be on the move. He will then play ♔d6 or ♔b6, winning.

The course of play as a whole is therefore to be classified under (a): the c-pawn advanced on its own account, for the tempo-transaction between the a-pawns made it a winning pawn, whereas otherwise, in view of the backward position of its own king, it would have been a drawing pawn.

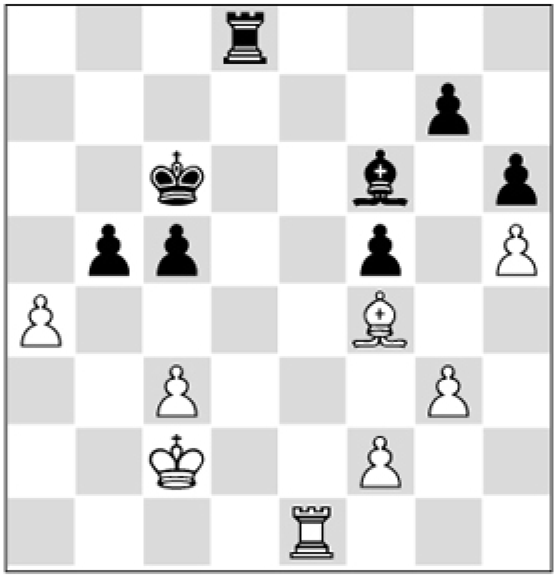
I tend to describe the above endgame as a spiritualist séance, for on first glance it is inexplicable that this endgame should be won with a pawn on a2 and only drawn with this pawn on a3 instead.

We close this chapter on passed pawns with some endgame studies and games, and wish once more to emphasize that we have treated this chapter as an introduction to positional play – hence the careful examination of positional details, such as the various functions of the blockader, etc. The reader who has little feel for abstract thought may skip over ‘The Reasons for the Duty to Blockade.’

Game conclusions and complete games featuring the passed pawn

In Diagram 181 White was on the move and sacrificed the exchange. The idea of the combination, throughout its long-winded and tedious length – please excuse me for using this somewhat strange-sounding expression, but there is no other way to put it – is as follows: the white king strives to take up the ideal position, a frontal attack against the isolated pawn (see Section 5). I succeeded in carrying out this concealed plan (although it could have been thwarted), as Rubinstein seemed handicapped by not being versed in the postulates of my system, which of course were well known to me. I know of no other endgame in which the striving for the ‘ideal king position’ is brought out in such sharp relief.

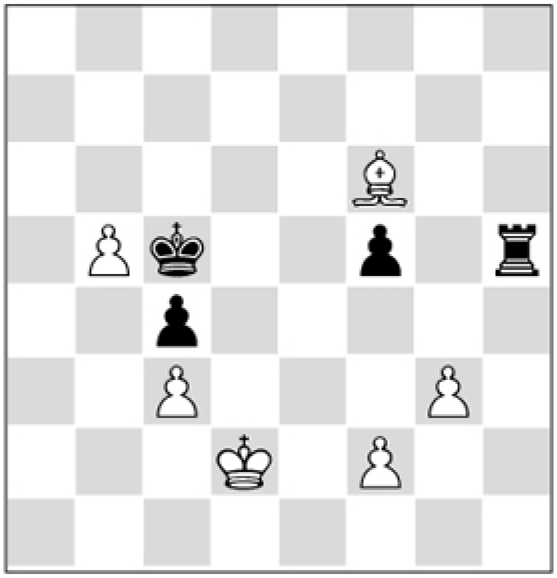
181



Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein, Breslau 1925

The game continued **1.♖e6+ ♚d5 2.♖xf6 gxf6 3.axb5** Threatening 4.c4+ ♔xc4 5.b6. **3…c4** Now White took the h6-pawn, although to do so he had to give up the b- and h-pawns. There followed **4.♗xh6 ♖h8 5.♗g7 ♖xh5 6.♗xf6 ♚c5 7.♔d2!** (Diagram 182).

182



White strives to get a frontal attack by his king against the isolated pawn. Black is to move and wins in any case

The point of all the previous play, for the one and only purpose of preparing the road for the king to go to f4.

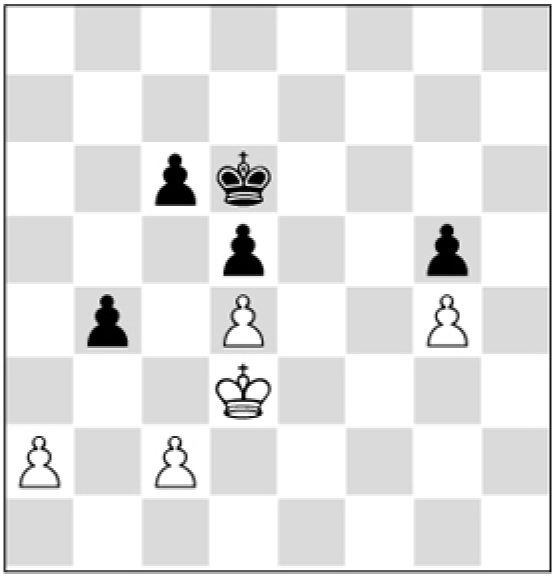
7…♚xb5? A mistake.. Here Black could have prevented White's king journey with 7…♖h6 8.♗d4+ ♚xb5 9.♔e3 ♖e6+ 10.♔f4? ♖e4+ followed by …♖xd4 and wins. The student should note that 10.♔f3 (instead of 10.♔f4?) could not have saved White's game either, for there would have come an opportune …♖e4 followed by …♔xb5 and the march of the king to e1 and …♖e2, etc.

After the text move the game continued **8.♚e3 ♚c5 9.♚f4!**. Now everything has been put right: **9…♚d5 10.f3** with a draw after a few more moves, since the rook and black king cannot both be freed at the same time (otherwise there would follow a double attack on c3 and an ensuing exchange sacrifice).

An instructive endgame! How ardent, how fervent this royal striving toward the aforementioned frontal attack! Why? Well, because this pursuit corresponds to a wish inherent in the innermost essence of the king – and, in addition, is an expression of the blockade law.

The second example shows the out-flanking maneuver in a simple way (see Diagram 183).

183

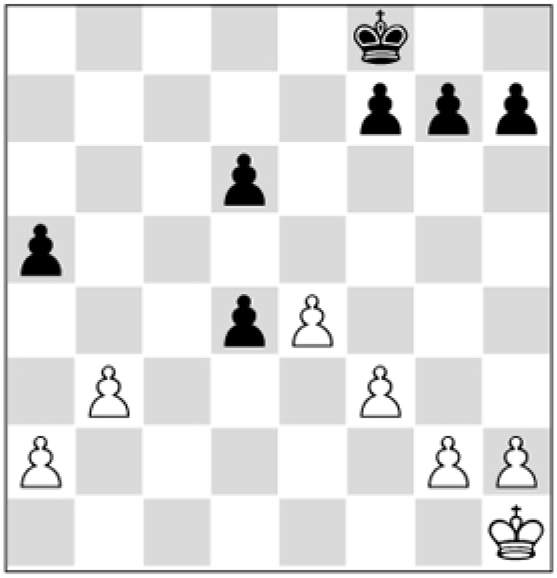


Hansen-Nimzowitsch, simultaneous game in Randers, Denmark

Black played **1…♚c7**. He has to do something to counter the threat c2-c3, creating an outside passed pawn. The ending now took the following simple but effective course: **2.c3** Or 2.c4 ♔b6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.♔c2 ♔a5! Tempo! **2…♚b6! 3.cxb4 ♚b5 4.♚c3 ♚a4**, when the outflanking works perfectly despite the loss of a pawn, as White's crippled position facilitates Black's maneuver.

Example 3 (Diagram 184) illustrates the diversionary effect of the remoter passed pawn.

184

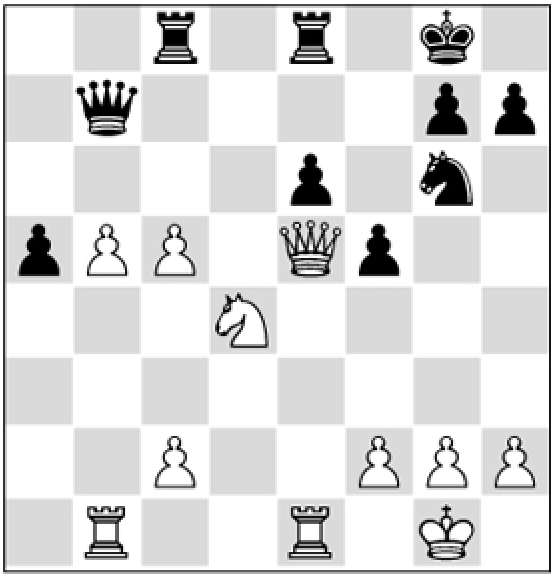


Tarrasch-Berger, Breslau 1889

After the exchange of queens in Game 6, the game proceeded **37.♚g1 ♚e7 38.♚f2 d5 39.e5**. The simpler 39.exd5 ♔d6 40.♔e2 ♔xd5 41.a3 ♔c5 followed by f2-f4 and an eventual diversion with b3-b4+ also would have won easily. **39…♚e6 40.♚e2** 40.f4 would be weak because of 40…g5 41.g3 gxf4 42.gxf4 ♔f5. **40…♚xe5 41.♚d3 h5 42.a3** 42.h4, first, was preferable. **42…h4! 43.b4 axb4 44.axb4 ♚d6 45.♚xd4 ♚c6 46.b5+** White omits the use of the *zugzwang* instrument. 46.f4, with the help of *zugzwang*, would have forced an accommodating pawn advance on the part of Black, thereby permitting White a subsequent, decisive king excursion and the execution of the black pawns. **46…♚xb5 47.♚xd5 ♚b4!** Now this diversion has less significance than might have been the case, since Black, after the win of the g- and h-pawns, needs only a few tempi for his own h-pawn. The ending is instructive because of the inaccuracies made in it. The position reached was won by White after Black overlooked a drawing possibility.

Example 4 (Diagram 185) is notable for its illustration of the mobility of the connected pawns (see Section 6 of this chapter).

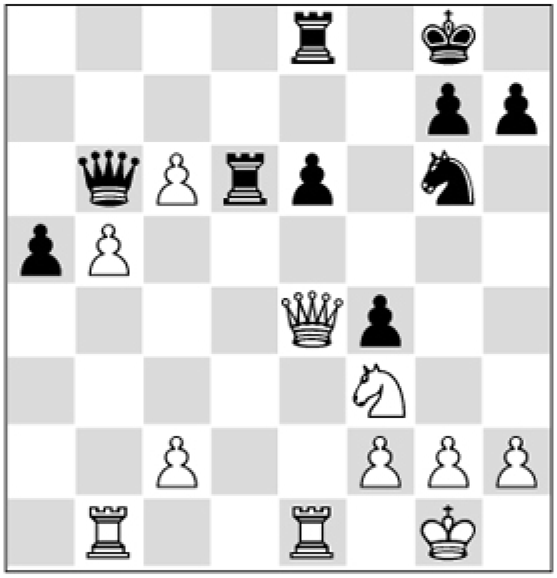
185



Nimzowitsch-Alapin St. Petersburg Masters’ Tournament 1914

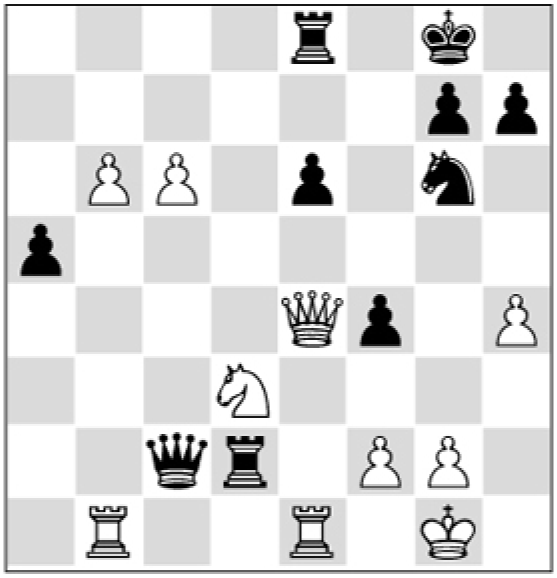
1.c6! Here the choice of the first pawn to be advanced is based not so much on a consideration of the stronger or weaker risk of a blockade but because otherwise White would lose the c-pawn. **1…♛b6** If 1…♖xc6 2.bxc6 ♕xb1 3.♖xb1 ♘xe5, then 4.c7, with a passed pawn and the absolute 7th rank (see Chapter 3, Section 3); e.g., 4…♘d7 5.♘c6 and wins. **2.♛e3** Now the task is to drive off the blockader from b6 so that the b-pawn that has lagged behind somewhat can catch up (see Section 6 of this chapter). **2…f4** White threatened 2…♘xf5. **3.♛e4 ♜cd8 4.♞f3 ♜d6** (Diagram 186)

186



5.h4! With his queen’s strong position in the center, White sets out to prove that his opponent’s defending pieces are ‘hanging in the air’. **5…♛c5** White’s plan is beginning to show results: the blockader is becoming more compliant! **6.♞e5** Good, and consequential too, would be 6.h5! ♕xh5 7.b6, when the two comrades are happily united. **6…♜d4** The main variation would be 6…♖d2 7.♘d3 ♕xc2 8.b6! (Diagram 187)

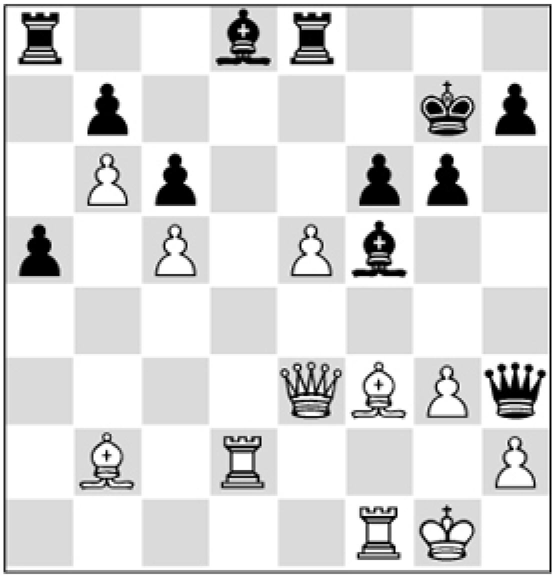
187



and the pawns march uninterruptedly to queen. **7.♛e2 ♞xh4 8.b6** All by the book! **8…♜b4 9.♜xb4 axb4 10.b7 ♛c3 11.♛e4 ♞f5 12.♞d7** and Black resigned.

Example 5 (Diagram 188) shows how tempestuous a passed pawn can become. As a rule we do not look upon him as temperamental, but we are certainly familiar with his lust to expand. The following example will therefore not surprise us.

188

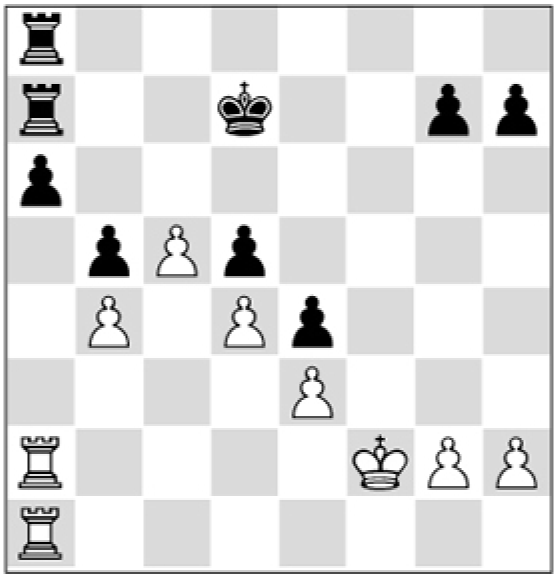


Nimzowitsch-Amateur
Nuremberg 1904
(odds of queen’s knight)
The triumphal march of the e-pawn

In the diagrammed position, there occurred **1.g4 ♗xg4 2.exf6+ ♔f7** The king in this position is a poor, because vulnerable, blockader. The danger of checkmate renders illusory his blockading effectiveness. **3.♗d5+** To give the rook at f1 some range of action without loss of time. The rook will now support the passed pawn with all its might. **3… cxd5 4.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 5.f7+ ♔f8** The final blockading attempt. But now one of the pieces to the rear, the bishop at b2, comes to life – that is, its diagonal has been lengthened – and makes its presence felt in a frightfully unpleasant manner. **6.♗g7+ ♔xg7 7.f8♕#**. This conclusion illustrates the lust to expand in a most concise and incisive way.

Example 6 (Diagram 189) is characteristic of the elasticity of the blockader. This position has been treated already in my article ‘The Blockade’ (see Appendix Two in this book). We therefore wish to highlight only the most important points.

189

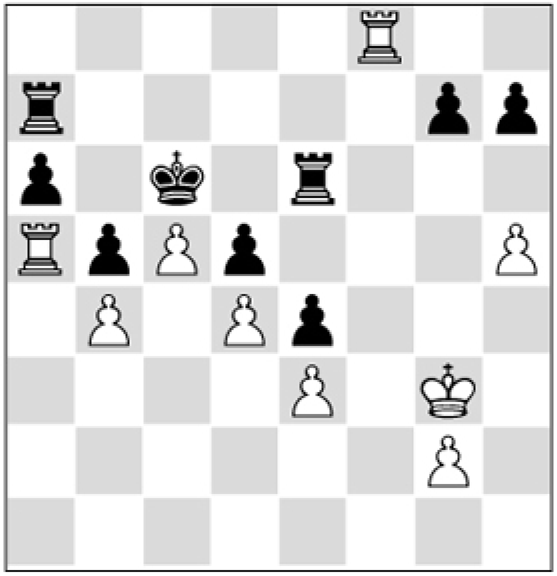


Nimzowitsch-Nilsson
Nordic Masters’ Tournament 1924

White wants to play down the f-file, for example with 1.♔g3 and 2.♖f1. The breakthrough-point f6 he will open with h2-h4-h5-h6, for which reason the white king is needed on the kingside. But despite the fact that (as pointed out) the f-file dominates the whole game, White found within himself the courage to withstand the impulse to adopt this plan. He calmly played 1.♖a5 and only afterwards took up the struggle along the f-file. The blockade 1.♖a5 is possible here because the blockader is elastic, that is, he can be brought over to the kingside in quick step.

The endgame proceeded as follows: **1.♖a5!! ♚c6 2.♔g3 ♚b7 3.♖f1 ♚c6 4.♖f5 ♜e7 5.h4 ♜aa7 6.h5 ♜e6 7.♖f8**

190



The breakthrough. And the rook still stands on a5, faithful and immovable, keeping guard! But this unbudging sentinel is prepared to intervene at any moment, whether by ♖a2-f2 (elasticity) or by ♖xa6, should the black rook move away. The possibility ♖xa6 is to be classified under ‘threats emanating from the blockading square.’

7…g6 8.h6 g6 9.♖b8 ♔c7 10. ♖bxb5 ♖xh6 11.♖a4 ♖f6 12.♖ba5 ♔c8 13.♔g4 h6 14.♖a2 ♖af7 15.♖xa6 and White won after a further seven moves.

With this last example we have suddenly found ourselves among the ‘blockaders.’ Let us now linger a bit in this somewhat mixed company. First, I want to present to you a blockader who in its many duties should be a blockader that, as we know, should acquit (in nothing less than an exemplary manner) its duty to blockade, threaten, and be elastic (morning gymnastics are recommended!). But it also shows itself to be quite industrious – indeed, it develops a veritable hunger for professional achievement. Observe and be amazed! (Here the ‘well-intentioned’ critics will butt into the discussion and chortle something about self-praise. But it is obvious that I am not admiring my own conduct of the game but rather the performance of the blockader, which, as it were, I abstract from my achievement. But what good is the mediocre critic, what is ‘abstracting’ to him? His world is governed by envy, and it is difficult to abstract anything from that.)

Game 12

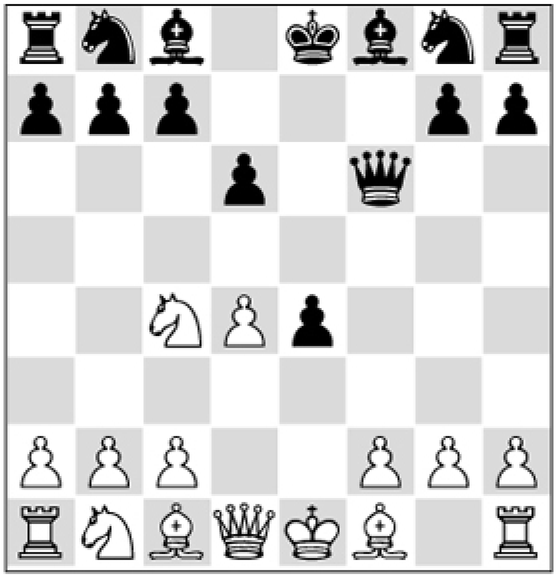
Aron Nimzowitsch
Carl Behting
Riga 10.7.1919

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f5

According to C. Behting’s view, which I am inclined to share, this move is thoroughly playable. At least I do not know a refutation of it.

3.♘xe5 ♕f6 4.d4 d6 5.♘c4 fxe4

191



Does the blockading move 6.♘e3 seem justified?

Theory, that is, the practice of the other masters, recommends at this point 6.♘c3 ♕g6 7.f3, but after 7…exf3 8.♕xf3 ♘f6 9.♗d3 ♕g4 10.♕e3+ ♗e7 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♖f4 ♕d7 14.♘b6 axb6 15.♖xb4 the game is level.

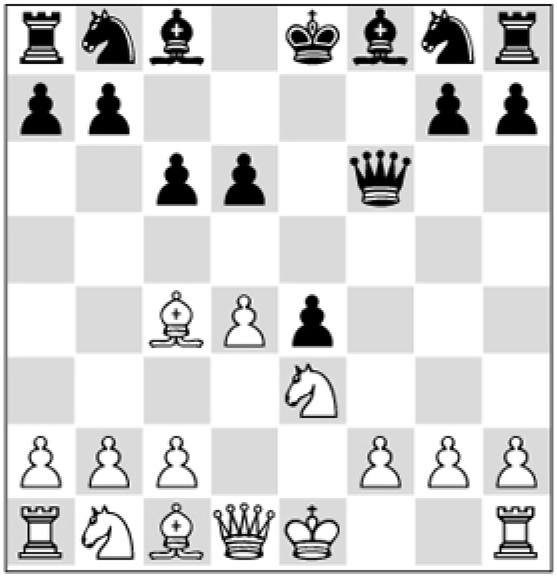
6.♘e3!!

Against this move speak: (1) tradition, which instead demands 6.♘c3; (2) the principle of economic development (not letting a piece wander about); (3) the apparently slight threat-effect of the blockader.

And yet, 6.♘e3, in combination with the following move, is in every respect an authentic master move. And even if the entire world plays 6.♘c3, I still consider my knight move to e3 the more correct choice, and this for reasons based purely on the ‘System.’

6…c6 7.♗c4!!

192



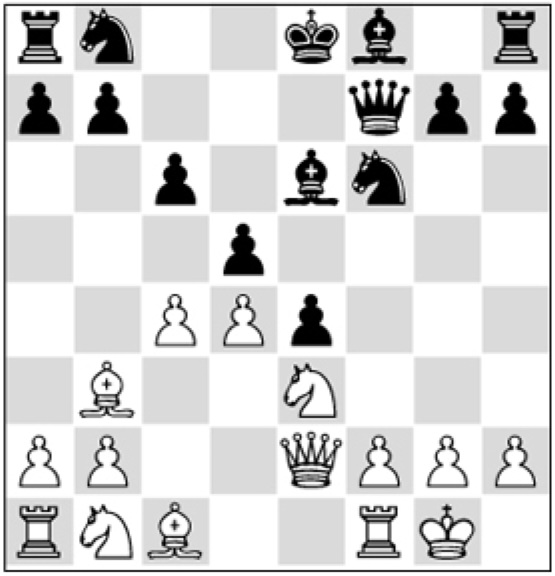
The point. To castle kingside the second player has to play …d6-d5, but by doing so he presents the e3-knight with a new sphere of influence (♗b3, then c2-c4 and pressure against d5).

7…d5 8.♗b3 ♗e6

Or 8…b5 9.a4 b4 10.c4, etc.

9.c4 ♕f7 10.♕e2 ♘f6 11.0-0

193



Not 11.♘c3 because of 11…♗b4. White wants to bring maximum pressure to bear on d5.

We should like now to consider more closely the position of the blockader on e3. Does it meet the stated requirements of a blockader? Yes, for he (1) exerts a strong blockade, hindering the approach of the enemy pieces (to g4); (2) carries out threats from his position; (3) is completely elastic, as is demonstrated later. In short, the knight on e3 is an ideal blockader!

11…♗b4! 12.♗d2 ♗xd2 13.♘xd2 0-0 14.f4

Intending f4-f5, winning the d5-pawn.

14…dxc4 15.♘dxc4 ♕e7 16.f5 ♗d5

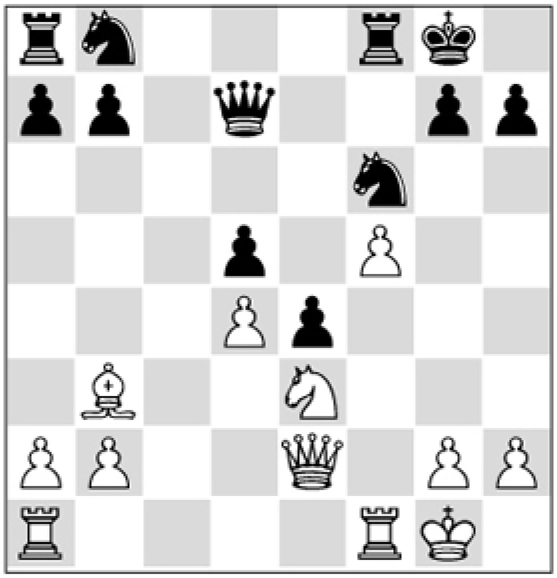
Black seeks to maintain the d5-point.

17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♘e3

The knight at e3 has only just disappeared when another takes its place. Against this ‘elasticity’ of the blockader, therefore, not even Death itself can accomplish anything!

18…♕d7

194



19.♘xd5!

The ‘threat-effect of the blockader from its post’ culminates in this decisive sacrifice.

19…♘xd5 20.♕xe4 ♖d8 21.f6!

The point of the combination, and at the same time a further illustration of the pawn’s lust to expand (the f5-pawn was a candidate).

21…gxf6

If 21…♘c6, then 22.f7+ ♔h8 23.♗xd5 ♕xd5? 24.f8♕+ and 25.♕xd5. If, however, (21…♘c6 22.f7+) 22…♔f8, then 23.♗xd5 ♕xd5 24.♕xh7 and wins.

22.♜f5 ♚h8 23.♜xd5 ♜e8

On 23…♕e8, 24.♗c2! would win a whole rook.

24.♜xd7 ♜xe4 25.♜d8+ ♚g7 26.♜g8+ ♚h6 27.♜f1

1-0

And now, in conclusion – otherwise, the passed pawn’s lust to expand could be dangerous to this entire book! – a companion piece to the previous game.

Game 13

Aron Nimzowitsch
Sergey von Freyman
Vilnius 1912

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♞f3 cxd4

4…♕b6 looks better.

5.♞xd4 ♞c6 6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.♝d3 ♛c7 8.♝f4 g5

Not altogether sound, but leading to interesting play.

9.♝g3 ♝g7 10.♛e2 ♞e7 11.0-0 h5 12.h3 ♞f5 13.♝h2

Obviously bad would be 13.♗xf5 exf5 14.e6 because of 14…f4 15.exf6+ ♔xf7, etc.

13…g4

The pretty point of the attack begun with 8…g5.

14.♜e1

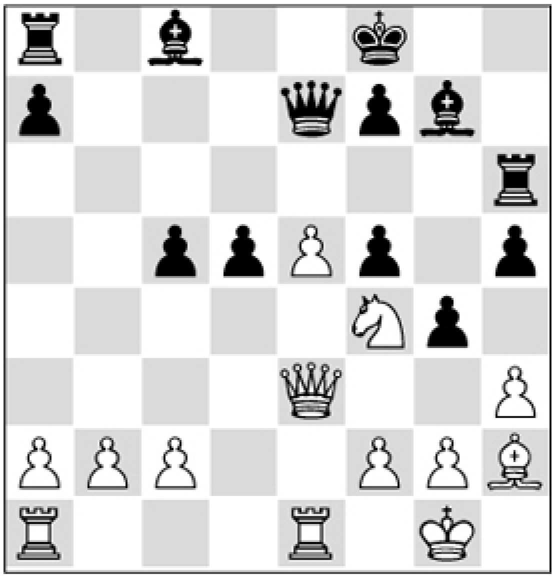
On 14.hxg4 hxg4 15.♕xg4 there would follow 15…♖xh2 16.♔xh2 ♗xe5+ and …♗xb2.

14…♚f8 15.♞c3!

The knight heads for f4 (after the exchange at f5).

15…♛e7 16.♝xf5 exf5 17.♛e3 ♜h6 18.♞e2 c5 19.♞f4!

195



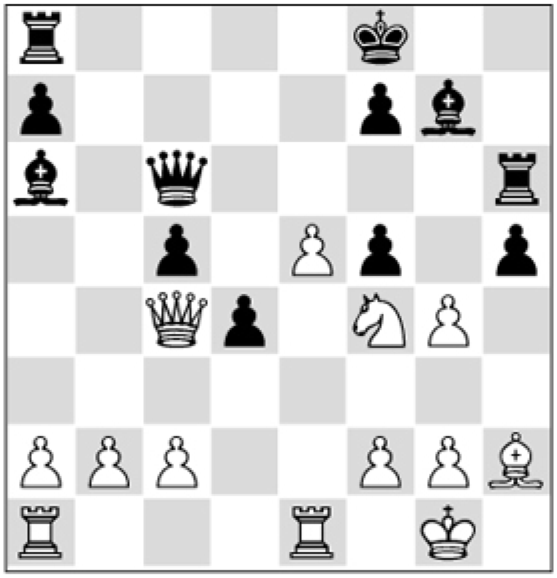
This knight is to be understood first and foremost as a blockader of f5 and of the pawns associated with the f5-pawn. In addition, the knight acts as an ‘anti-blockader’ for his own aspiring pawn at e5.

19…d4 20.♕d3 ♕d7 21.♕c4 ♕c6 22.hxg4!

The necessary prelude to ♘d3. On the immediate 22.♘d3 there would follow 22…gxh3; e.g., 23.♕xc5+ ♕xc5 24.♘xc5 ♖g6 25.g3 and White stands poorly.

22…♗a6

196



23.♕d5!! ♕xd5

Quite interesting here is 23…hxg4. The sequel would be the triumphal march of the e-pawn to e8!; e.g., 24.e6 (with an attack on the queen) 24…♕xd5 25.e7+ ♚e8 26.♘xd5 followed by check on c7. The ‘surprising advance of the unstoppable pawn.’

24.♘xd5 ♝c4

If 24…hxg4, then, again, 25.e6!, winning the exchange.

25.♘f6 hxg4 26.♝f4 ♜g6 27.♘d7+

Winning the c-pawn and, after a further twenty moves, the game.

27…♚e7 28.♘xc5 ♜c8 29.b4 ♝h6 30.♜ad1 ♝xf4 31.♜xd4 ♜h6 32.♜xc4 ♜ch8 33.♚f1 ♜h1+ 34.♚e2 ♜xe1+ 35.♚xe1 ♝xe5 36.♘d3 ♝d6 37.a4 a5 38.b5 ♜h1+ 39.♚e2 ♜h2 40.♘f4 ♝xf4 41.♜xf4 ♜xg2 42.c4 ♜g1 43.♜xf5 ♚e6 44.♜d5 ♜b1 45.♜d8 ♚e7 46.♜a8 ♜b4 47.c5 ♜xa4 48.b6 ♜b4 49.c6 ♜xb6 50.c7

1-0

Of particular interest in this game is the role played by the knight on f4. As a blockader, this knight was strongly posted and very well protected (by the bishop on h2). It also had a restraining effect on the bishop at g7 and the rook on h6, etc. Further, its ‘threat-effect’ was considerable, particularly against d5 and e6 (the mobility of the e5-pawn constitutes a piquant counterpart to the immobility of the f5-pawn). And finally, the elasticity of this knight was of great importance, for it could calmly go on its travels, leaving the bishop to take its place at f4.

Schema for the passed pawn (a question and answer game)

I. *How does a passed pawn come into being?*

Through a majority. The rule of candidates.

II. *Why must we blockade passed pawns?*

1. Because otherwise they are always threatening to advance. Self-annihilation as threatening play. The metaphor of the criminal (police surveillance is not enough!).

2. Because the blockade square is safe from frontal attacks and moreover tends to become a ‘weak point’ for the opponent.

3. Because an entire enemy complex can become paralysed.

III. *What demands may we make of the blockader?*

1. The basic blockade effect.
2. The execution of threats from its position.
3. Elasticity.

IV. *What enhances the blockade effect or elasticity?*

The blockade effect is enhanced by its alliance with the pieces to the rear (over-protection is advisable!). Elasticity, however, increases automatically with the growing blockade-effect. But the pawn to be blockaded may not be permitted to advance too far.

V. *What is the most mysterious aspect in a blockade situation?*

The fact that blockade squares are in most cases shown to be good squares in every respect (doubtless to be explained by the aforementioned tendency of the blockade square to be a weak point for the opponent).

VI. *How does the play against the blockader find its expression?*

1. In the form of trying to uproot it.
2. By undertaking a ‘change of the blockader.’

VII. *Why is the opposition an outmoded concept?*

Because the situation is appraised only by external symptoms. My three-part compound maneuver.

VIII. *Which passed pawns are ‘privileged’ and how are they to be handled?*

1. The two connected passed pawns (which advance together as comrades). Filling the hole.
2. The ‘protected’ passed pawn.
3. The ‘remoter’ passed pawn. The diversionary effect. Preparations for the king’s journey are to be made early on.

IX. *What are the goal and purpose of an advance in the case of a ‘passed pawn’?*

1. To get to the final goal: promoting the pawn or protecting a critical point.
2. To gain room for the king following from behind.
3. To terminate its existence through a diversionary sacrifice. The distance between the diverting pawn and the enemy king should be as great as possible.

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Chapter 5

On Exchanging

A short chapter essentially to orient the student on the possible motives for exchanging

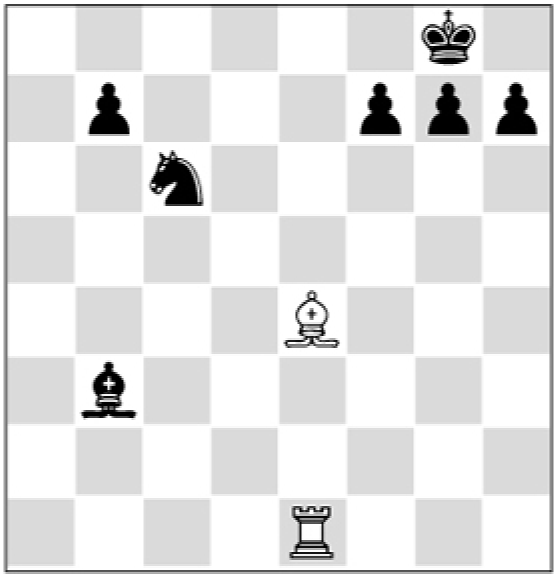
In order to enlighten the student about the dangers of an all-too-impulsive urge to trade off the pieces whenever possible, we propose in the following pages to enumerate those few cases where exchanging is indicated. In all other cases, every exchange – all the more so when such a trade is a spasmodic impulse – is bad. With the master player the process of exchanging occurs in and of itself. The master is in possession of files or secures his command of particular points of strategic importance, and the possibility of exchanging, manifestly to his liking, drops like a ripe fruit into his lap (cf. Game 11, note to the 35th move).

In Chapter 1 we analysed the exchange with a consequent win of tempo. In addition, we traded material so that we didn't have to retreat or be forced to make a tempo-losing defensive move (liquidation with subsequent development). Both cases are in the final analysis to be regarded as tempo combinations – the tempo calculation plays an important role in general in every exchange. We need only think of an exchange of a newly developed piece for one that has gobbled up several tempi. In the middlegame the 'tempo' motif finds expression in the following situations:

1. We exchange in order to occupy (or perhaps to open) a file without loss of time

The simplest example is illustrated in Diagram 197.

197



White to move

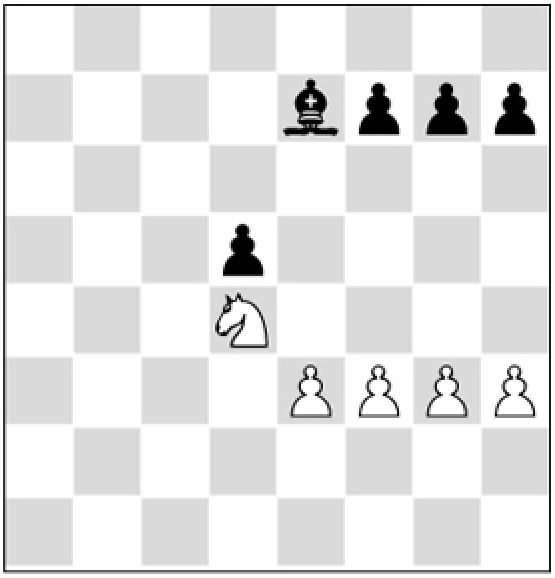
White wants to occupy (that is to say, open) a file to be able to administer checkmate on the 8th rank. But if for this purpose he were to play 1.♗f3 or 1.♖a1, Black would have time to do something about the mate threat, for instance, 1…♔f8 or 1…g6. Correct in the position is the exchange **1.♗xc6**. Black here does not have time to protect against the mate, for (also to be understood in the psychological sense) he ‘must’ recapture.

2. We destroy a defender by exchanging

We destroy it because we recognize it as a defender, in the simplest case as a defender of material values; every protecting piece can be so regarded. In the first four chapters we familiarized ourselves with various protecting pieces: pieces that protect a pawn obstructing an open file; pieces that assist a blockader from the side; and pawns that help support an outpost, etc. In each of these cases it is desirable to destroy the defender. But the concept ‘defender’ has a far wider meaning. Terrain can also be defended – e.g., entry into the 7th rank – or the approach of one’s opponent can be warded off (in Game 12, the knight at e3 ‘defends’ the g4- and f5-squares against a possible approach by …♕g4 or …♖f5). Further, it is well known that a knight at f6 ‘defends’ the whole castled position (stopping the approach ♕h5, etc.).

So, too, in the case of a centrally placed blockader (Diagram 198).

198

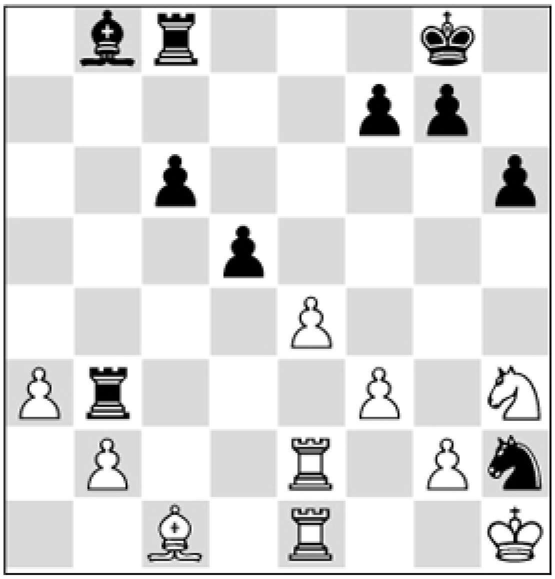


The blockader as defender

Thanks to its attacking radius the knight protects and safeguards a wide terrain. But this knight is also to be understood as a defender in our sense. The rule is: every defender in a narrower or broader sense should be considered worthy of one’s destructive wrath!

In Diagram 199 White wins by means of a series of exchanges; both kinds of exchanges are seen combined.

199



A series of exchanges, combining Cases 1 and 2

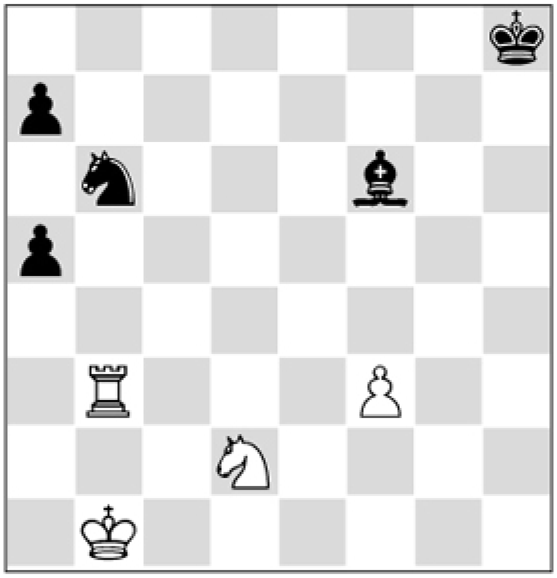
A glance at the position shows us a knight on h2 that has gone astray; its defender is at b8. We play **1.exd5** (opening a file without loss of time; this is Case 1) **1…cxd5 2.♖e8+** (he rook on c8 is the defender of the eighth rank – it has to die!) **2…♖xe8 3.♖xe8+ ♔h7 4.♖xb8** The main defender has fallen. **4…♖xb8 5.♔xh2** and wins.

3. We exchange so as not to lose time by retreating

We are concerned here principally with a piece that is being attacked, and are faced with the choice whether to lose time by retreating or to exchange our piece for an enemy piece. We choose the latter, especially when by doing so we can make good use of the tempo saved (by not retreating).

The question of tempo must therefore be a current subject of discussion in one form or another. The simplest example can be seen in Diagram 200.

200



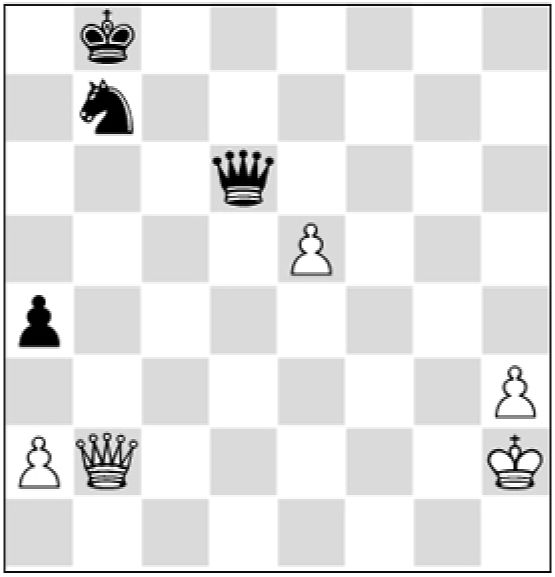
White exchanges to avoid losing time.
1.♘e4 a4 A counter-attack. **2.♖xb6** To save a tempo. **2…axb6 3.♘xf6** and wins.

When a major piece on each side is under attack we have a sub-type of this third case. We say:

3a. The attacked piece seeks to sell its life as dearly as possible

In Diagram 201:

201



The queen at b2 sells her life as dearly as possible

Black plays **1…a3**. White is content to exchange queen for queen, but if his queen at b2 is to be condemned to death, it is understandable that he would wish to sell her life as dearly as possible. This is like the soldier who is surrounded on all sides and who accordingly is ready to die, but who carries on until his last round of ammunition has been spent. He will bring down as many of the enemy as he can – his life should be sold dearly!! Therefore, **2.♕xb7+!**, to at least get something for the queen, she who was once so young and beautiful…

Curiously enough, such a ‘mercantile’ offer of the queen is much less familiar to the beginner than a heroic self-sacrifice. This latter is a common occurrence with him (though perhaps it might not involve the queen, for whom he has the most infernal respect), but the former is utterly foreign to him. It is, by the way, hardly a sacrifice, or at most only a temporary one, and it is perhaps in this fusion of ‘sacrifice’ and sober conservation of material that the psychological difficulty lies, to which the beginner tends to succumb.

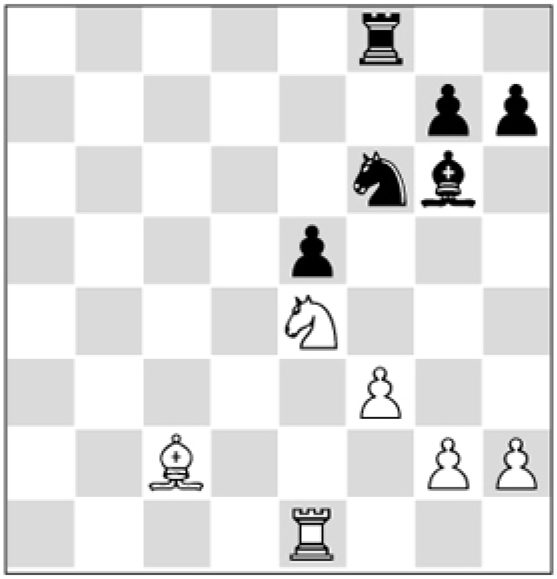
4. How and where the exchange usually takes place

Lack of space prohibits us from a detailed discussion of this question. We will only briefly point out that:

(a) Simplification is desirable for the side that is ahead in material. From this it follows that exchanging can be used as a weapon to force the opponent from strong positions.

(b) When two parties aim at the same goal, conflict arises. In chess, this takes the form of a battle of exchanges. An example is shown in Diagram 202.

202



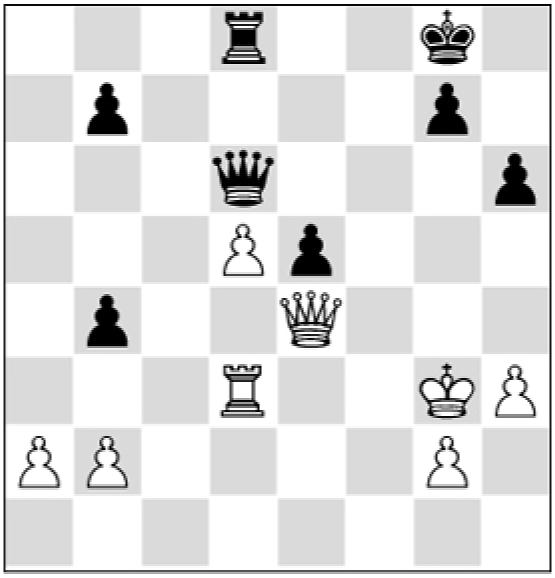
(with many other pieces on the board)
Bloodshed at e4

The key point is e4. White is protecting and over-protecting this point as much as he can. Black seeks to clear it, as a piece on e4 is bothersome to him on account of its attacking radius. And in the end this conflict comes down to a great bloodshed at e4.

(c) When we are strong on a file, a simple advance along this file is sufficient to bring about an exchange, for the opponent cannot brook an invasion of his position. At the very least he has to weaken its effect by exchanges.

(d) Weak points, or weak pawns, tend to get exchanged for one another (like an exchange of prisoners). The endgame in Diagram 203 illustrates this last case.

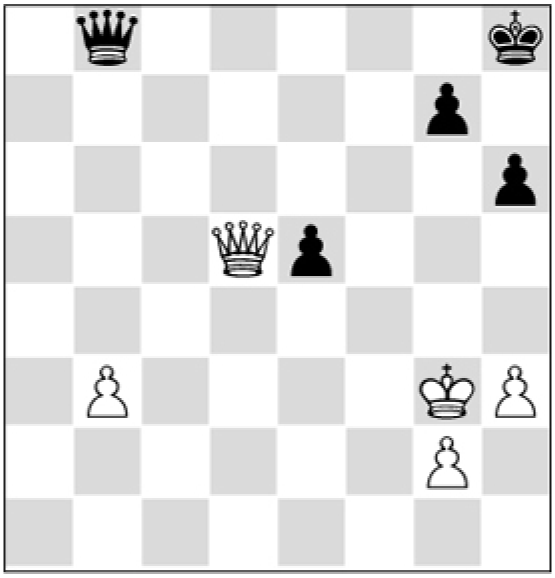
203



Dr. Bernstein-Dr. Perlis, St Petersburg 1909

The game proceeded **31…♖a8 32.♖b3 ♖xa2 33.♖xb4**. The weak pawns at a2 and b4 have been exchanged for one another and have disappeared; the same happens to the pawns on d5 and b7. **33…♖a5 34.♖xb7 ♖xd5 35.♖b8+!** The simple utilization of the b-file leads to the desired exchanges. **35…♕xb8 36.♕xd5+ ♔h8**. Dr. Lasker correctly pointed out that it would have been preferable to maneuver the king to f6. **37.b3** (Diagram 204):

204

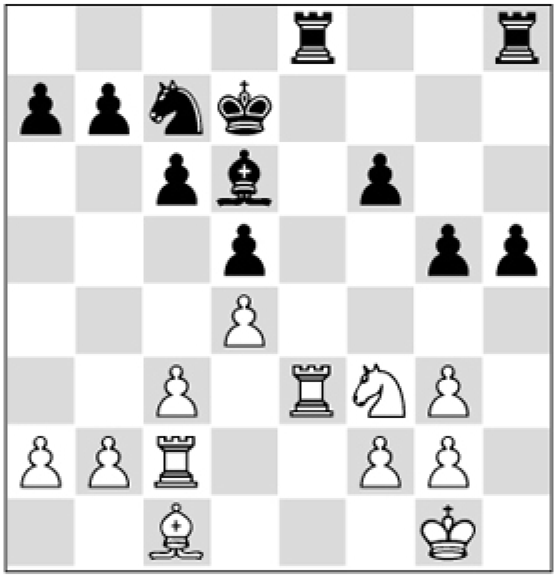


and Bernstein won with the b-pawn in a brilliantly conducted ending, to which we will return later in this book.

We conclude this chapter with two game conclusions.

Diagram 205 shows the position after White’s 21st move in the game Rosselli-Rubinstein:

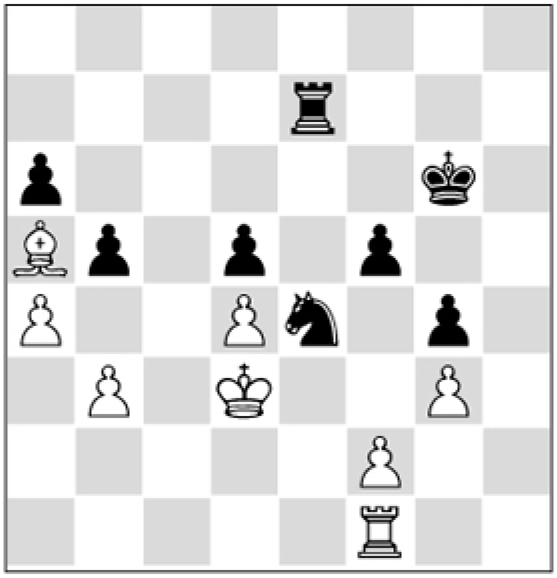
205



Rosselli-Rubinstein (1925)

The game continued: **21…♜xe3** Otherwise ♖ce2 follows; besides, Black has no other reasonable move. **22.♝xe3 ♞e8 23.♜e2 ♞g7 24.♝d2 ♞f5! 25.♜e1 c5 26.dxc5 ♝xc5**. Now the d4-square has become the focus of attention and a battle will take place over it. **27.♚f1 h4 28.gxh4 g4 29.♞d4! ♝xd4 30.cxd4**. See the previous note. **30…♜xh4 31.♝c3 ♜h1+ 32.♚e2 ♜h2 33.♜g1 ♞h4 34.g3 ♞f5 35.b3 ♚e6 36.♝b2 a6 37.♝c3 ♞d6 38.♚e3 ♞e4 39.♝e1**. Rubinstein now undertook some futile attempts along the c-file. After White’s 55th move the game arrived at the position in Diagram 206.

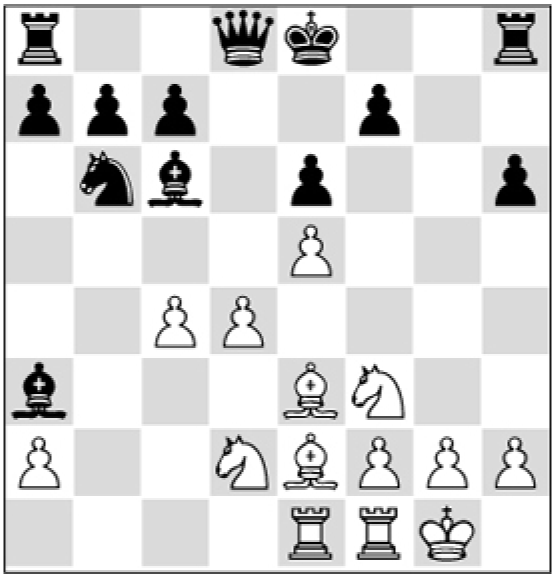
206



Now the decisive breakthrough: **55…f4! 56.gxf4 ♜h7 57.♝d2 ♞xd2!** Slaying the defender of f4 and f2. **58.♚xd2 ♜h3 59.f3 gxf3 60.♜f2 ♚f5 61.♚e3 ♚g4 62.b4** If 62.f5, then 62…♔xf5 63.♖xf3 ♖xf3 64.♔xf3 bxa4 65.bxa4 a5 followed by outflanking by Black's king. **62…♜h1 63.f5 ♜e1+ 64.♚d3 ♜e4**, and White resigned.

After this classic ending from a tournament encounter let us turn to a coffee-house game played at odds, in which the exchange-motif appeared in an original form (see Diagram 207).

207



Nimzowitsch-Druwa, Riga 1919

White, who had given the trifling odds of queen for knight, ‘risked’ the breakthrough **1.d5**. There followed **1…exd5**. More solid is 1…♘xd5. **2.e6 fxe6** Correct was 2…0-0. **3.♘e5** This was the typical advance at risk of self-destruction; the knight at e5 is the ‘awakened man from the rear-guard’. **3…♘xc4 4.♗h5+ ♔e7 5.♘xc6+!** A surprise. Who would have expected an exchange in the midst of a pursuit of the enemy? **5…bxc6 6.♖f7+ ♔d6 7.♘xc4+ dxc4 8.♖d1+** Now the meaning of White’s play becomes clear: the bishop at c6 was a defender (on account of the possibility of …♗d5 at this point). **8…♔e5 9.♗f4+ ♔e4 10.♗f3** mate!

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Chapter 6

The Elements of Endgame Strategy

Introduction and General Remarks. The typical disproportion.

It is a well-known phenomenon that the same amateur who is able to conduct the middlegame handsomely enough is usually quite helpless in the endgame phase. This disproportion reflects little credit on the old style of chess pedagogy. One of the principal requisites of good chess is the ability to handle the middlegame and endgame equally well. It is certainly true that, by the nature of things, the student first gathers experience in the opening and middlegame phases, but this evil, for such it is, must be balanced out as quickly as possible.

At the very start one must draw the student’s attention to the fact that the endgame does not merely serve up tasteless and boring leftovers from the rich feast of the middlegame. The endgame is, rather, the part of the game in which the advantages created in the middlegame should be systematically realized. Now, this realization of advantages – and this is especially true of advantages of a material kind – is by no means an activity of a ‘subordinate’ kind. On the contrary, the whole man, the whole artist in him, is required for it! In order to know, and to be able to appreciate, what is happening in the endgame phase one must become acquainted with its elements – for the endgame has elements just as the middlegame does. One of these, the passed pawn, we have already analysed in depth. There remain to be considered, then:

1. Centralization, with a sub-section on play with the king, i.e., taking shelter and bridge-building.
2. The aggressive rook position and the active piece in general.
3. Rallying isolated troop detachments.
4. The ‘combined advance’.

5. The already indicated ‘materialization of files’ – to be understood in the sense that the file, which at first exerts an ‘abstract’ influence, now becomes focused on a concrete point (protected by a pawn) or takes on a concrete aspect.
The endgame is very interesting in itself, even if Rinck and Troitzky had never lived.

1. Centralization

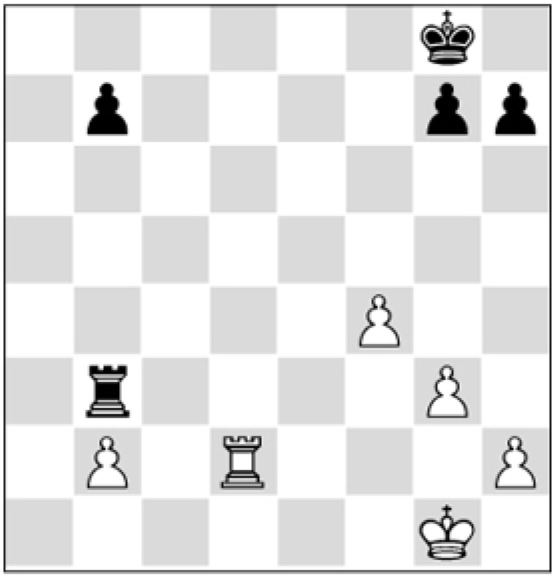
(a) of the king; (b) of the minor pieces; (3) of the queen. The journey to the king’s castle. How the old majesty manages to find shelter in the face of thunder and lightning. Taking shelter. Building a bridge.
(a) The great mobility of the king forms as we know one of the characteristic features of all endgame strategy. In the middlegame the king is nothing more than a background actor, but in the endgame he is one of the principal players. It is therefore necessary to ‘develop’ it, to bring it closer to the line of battle. This is achieved by centralizing the king. Hence:

RULE: **At the beginning of the endgame phase, put the king in motion and strive to get it to the center of the board, for from here he can, according to need, swing to the right or left (i.e., to attack the enemy kingside or queenside).**

There now arises, say, the following image: with slow and gradual steps the king approaches the center, where upon arrival he gathers all his ministers and advisors around him, fortifies himself with a sumptuous breakfast, consults his ministers, has a second breakfast (the king breakfasts twice, unlike mere mortals), again consults his collected advisors, and only then does he choose a convenient spot from which he and his advisors can view the battle. This image should help us visualize the characteristic slowness of resolve by which the king ventures forth.
Example 1: White with a king at g1, Black with a rook at e8. **1.♚f2** The king heads for the center, at the same time protecting his base against an entry by the rook into e2 or e1.

Example 2: See Diagram 208.

208

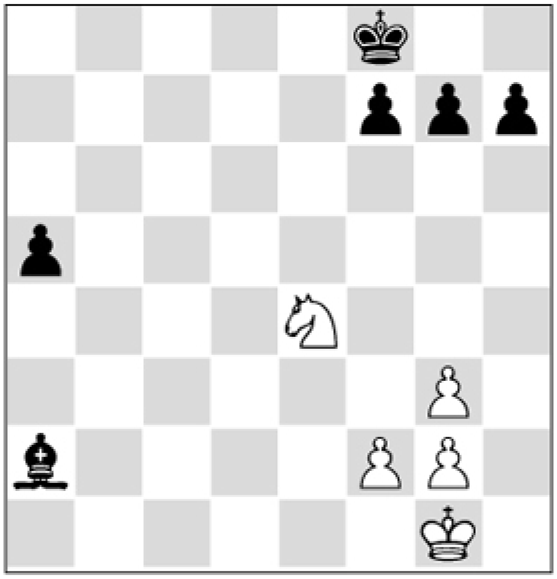


White to move

Here, too, White begins with ♔f2-e2, and from this position proceeds to the queenside: ♔d1-c2, in this way protecting the b-pawn and releasing his rook, which can now undertake something, for instance by ♖d7.

Example 3:

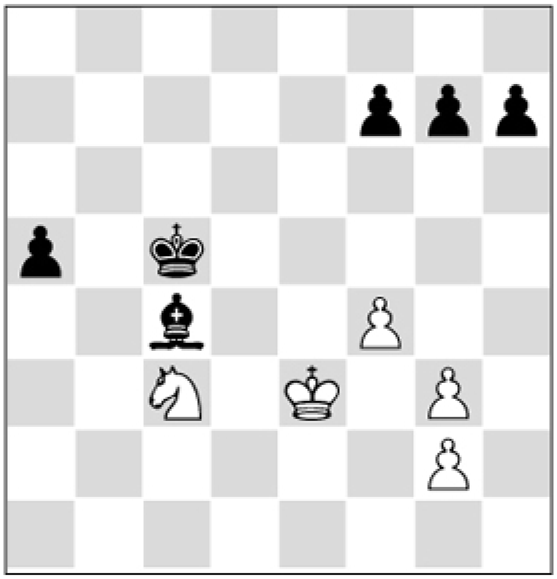
209



Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907
The struggle of the kings for the central squares

In Diagram 209 White played **33.♞c3**, inasmuch as the immediate centralization of the king would fail to …♗d5. For instance, 33.♔f1 ♗c4+ 34.♔e1 ♗d5, forcing either an exchange of pieces or the win of a pawn. Then **33.♞c3 ♝c4 34.f4 ♚e7 35.♚f2 ♚d6 36.♚e3 ♚c5** (see Diagram 210):

210

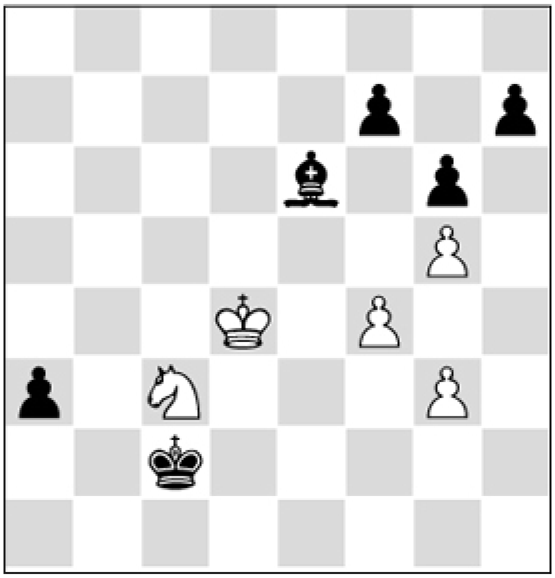


White to move.
Black’s position wins itself

The right moment for White’s king to annex the d4-square had passed. In a position with the white king at d4 and the black king on d6, on the other hand, the win would be much more difficult. The actual game, however, plays itself:

37.g4 ♚b4. This is the crux of the matter: the central position at c5 is to be regarded as the preliminary phase of an attack on the flank, and therein lies the importance of centralization. **38.♚d4** Too late (see the final remark). **38…♗b3 39.g5 a4 40.♘b1 ♗e6 41.g3 ♚b3 42.♘c3 a3 43.♚d3 g6 44.♚d4 ♚c2!** (Diagram 211)

211

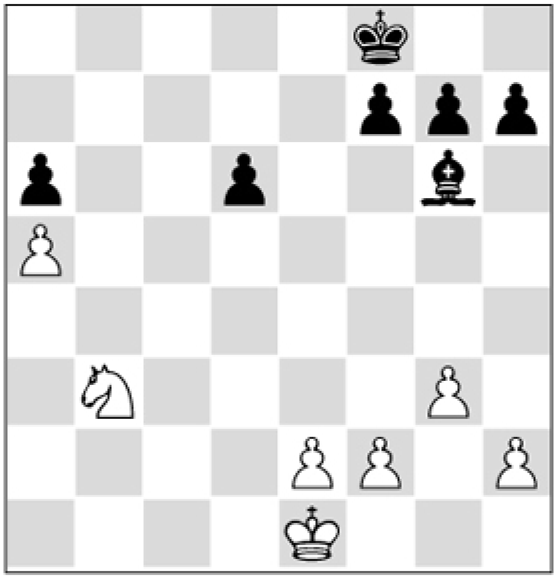


and White resigned.

In this example we have come to know the advance to the center from a different angle. This advance should not merely help provide the king with freedom to move about; no, in addition it should limit the terrain available to the enemy king. In these and similar struggles the king, with all his external dignities, concentrates on something very small: it contends for a square as though his kingdom were at stake! The student should take this lesson to heart: he should bring his king as near to the center as possible by any means, partly for the sake of his own king’s intentions but also partly to limit the power of the enemy king, to deny him a place in the sun!

(b) Centralization is not to be understood as a purely royal prerogative. The other pieces, too, educe a similar tendency. In Diagram 212, White can choose either ♔d2-c3-d4 or 1.♘d4 followed by e2-e3.

212

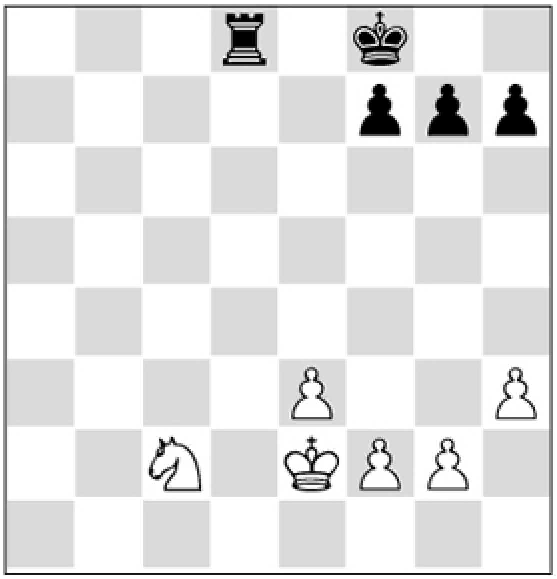


White occupies the central square d4

The centralization of the knight, as in the previous example, has a two-fold tendency:

1. From d4 he looks over at both wings.
2. He limits the effectiveness of the enemy king (preventing him from arriving at d5 via e6). If there is an enemy rook on the board the knight provides a protective wall for his own king, who then will likewise assume a central position behind the knight. Dr. Tartakower, the ingenious and witty author of *Hypermodern Chess*, would call this arrangement an island of pieces. The simplest example of this can be seen in Diagram 213:

213



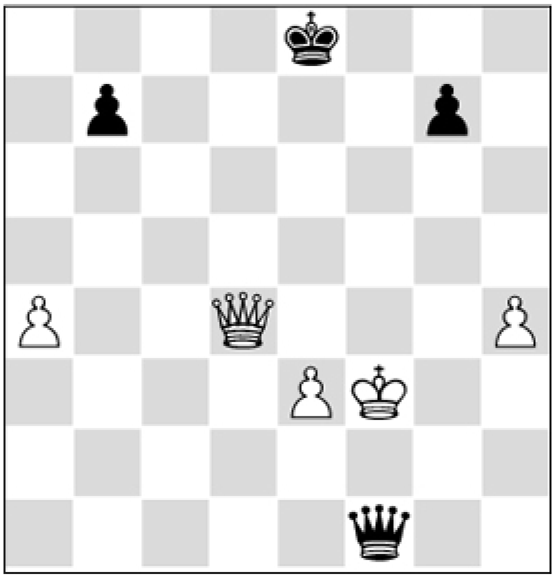
White strives to create an ‘island of pieces’

1.♘d4 followed by ♔d3, with a central island of pieces (comprising king, knight, and pawn)!

(c) There is no more compelling evidence for the importance of centralization than the recognition that even the queen, who exerts significant influence even when positioned at the edge of the board, seeks to become centralized. The ideal would be a ‘central’ queen, protected by a pawn and in her turn protecting the pawn. Under such a protectorate the king can undertake long journeys into enemy territory!

Consider Diagram 214.

214



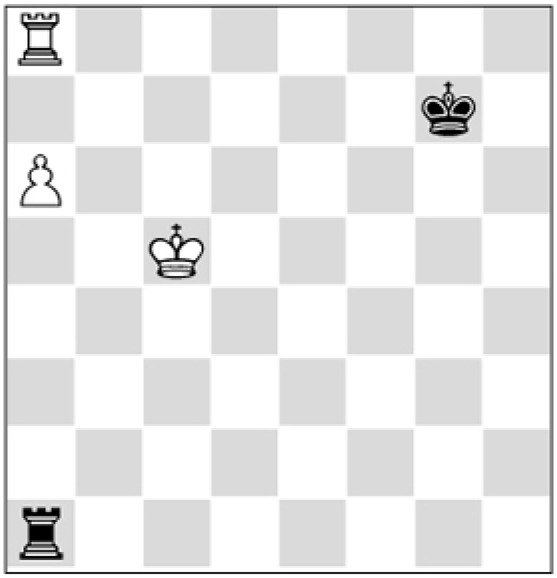
The centrally placed queen, protected and protecting, permits the white king to foray into enemy territory. His goal is either b6 or g6 (frontal attack)

White lets the winds blow around his ears and, like a fairy-tale hero, goes happily and jauntily into the wide world. Finally, he comes to a marvelous castle, and waiting for him there, as in the fairy tales… is the king’s young daughter. It is just the same with our king at f3, only with the difference that two castles are beckoning to him at the same time: the ideal positionings on b6 and g6 (see also Diagram 130). After long odysseys he is finally able to get to one of these squares, arrives there safely, and wins. (Cf., also, Diagram 238).

The shelter and building a bridge

We just now compared our wanderlust chess king with the happy and hopeful on-call traveling journeyman from the fairy tales. But between real life and the fairy tale there are sometimes small, realistically colored differences. In the fairy tale, thunder and lightning happen often enough, but no one ever picks up even the most insignificant sniffle (even if the evil queen from time to time tends to be a bit ‘snuffy’). But in the trivial real world a genuine cold is not an atypical occurrence. To protect himself from the dangers of such a cold the king should take care to provide himself in good time with a serviceable shelter. In the event of a storm such protection would render him excellent service.

215

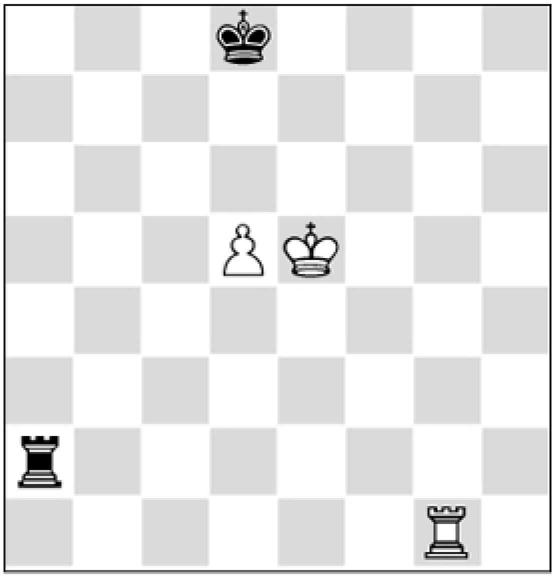


The shelter

In the position shown in Diagram 215, 1.a7 would be an obvious mistake, for after 1…♖a2 2.♔b6, to be able to move the rook away, to be followed by the conversion of the pawn, the white king would be without protection and exposed to the storm (that is, the series of checks by the black rook). The right course would be to regard the a7-square as a shelter for the king, thus **1.♚b6 ♜b1+ 2.♚a7 ♜b2 3.♜b8 ♜a2 4.♜b6 ♜a1 5.♚b7**; since the sun is shining now, the old king can venture forth. **5… ♜a2 6.a7** and wins.

The play would be similar in the position shown in Diagram 216.

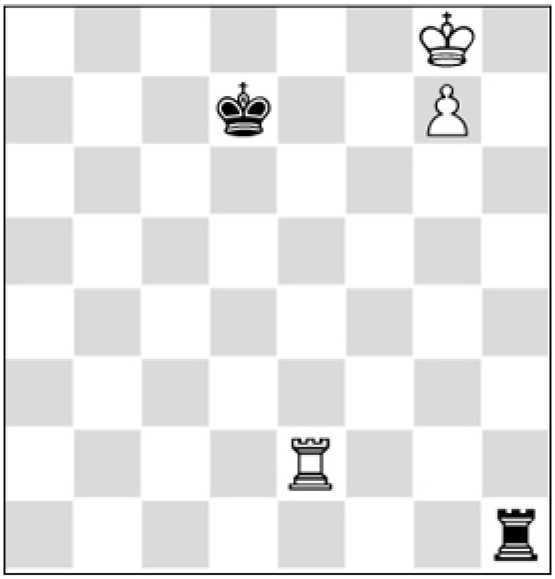
216



Here, d6 is the shelter. Therefore, not 1.d6, which would render this square unusable by White! Correct is **1.♚e6**, and if **1…♜e2+**, then **2.♚d6** and Black has 'shot his bolt' and finds himself in danger, as his king will be driven away from the queening square.

This is just how we humans are 'constructed'. The fact that when by chance we have found something that is fruitful for us, we then endeavor to learn to produce this fortuitous discovery from an exercise of our will. So too here. Endgame technique demands of us that we should be able to build our own shelter, perhaps the way the 'pathfinder' builds his tent. For this, building a bridge comes to our aid. Consider Diagram 217.

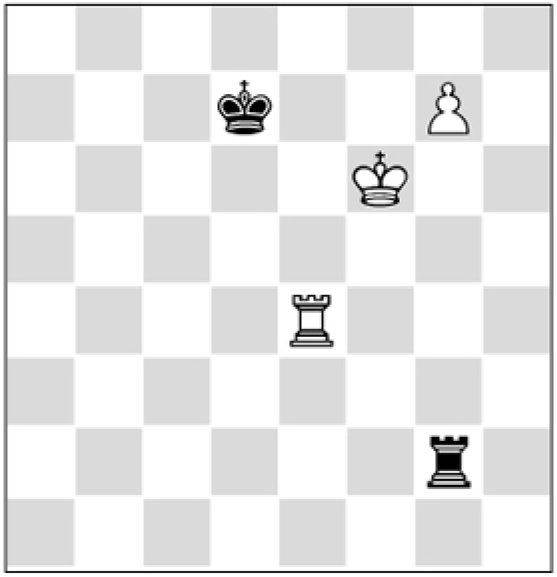
217



Building a bridge

If White plays 1.♔f7, there follows a series of checks, and the white king will have to go back to g8 empty-handed. The key, rather, is **1.♖e4!**, at first glance an incomprehensible move. Black plays **1…♜h2**, when the white king can again venture out: **2.♔f7 ♜f2+ 3.♔g6 ♜g2+ 4.♔f6!** (Diagram 218)

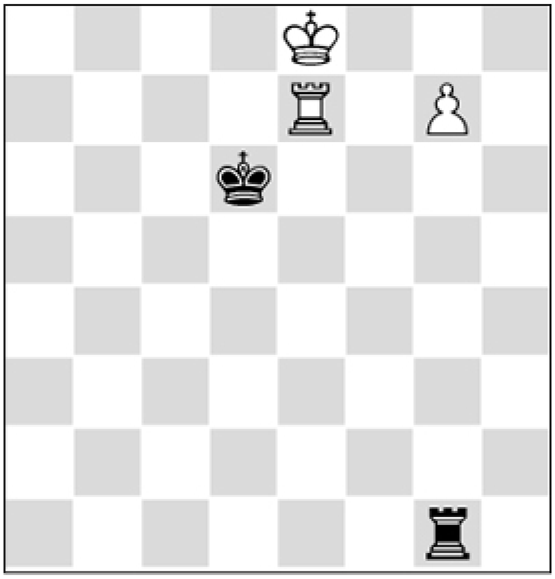
218



4…♜f2+ 5.♔g5! ♜g2+ 6.♖g4! The bridge is complete, the g5-square has become a perfect shelter. After 4.♔f6! Black could have marked time with 4…♖g1 (instead of 4…♖f2+), when we would see a delightful maneuver that every bridge builder would have to envy. In fact, we transport the whole bridge and all its fittings from one place to another, with 5.♖e5!!, building the bridge with ♖g5, so that our shelter is now at g6. This charming line of play belongs to – the most ordinary of everyday maneuvers, giving proof of the wonderful beauty of chess!

It is interesting to investigate whether **1.♖e5** might not also be feasible. This is indeed the case: 1.♖e5 also wins, although less convincingly than the ‘author’s solution’ 1.♖e4. On 1.♖e5, there follows **1…♔d6 2.♔f7 ♖f1+ 3.♔e8** Not 3.♔g6 on account of 3…♔xe5 4.g8♕ ♖g1+, etc. **3…♖g1 4.♖e7** (Diagram 219)

219



4…♖a1 (4…♖g2 5.♔f8 ♖g1 6.♖f7 and wins) **5.♖d7+**, winning.

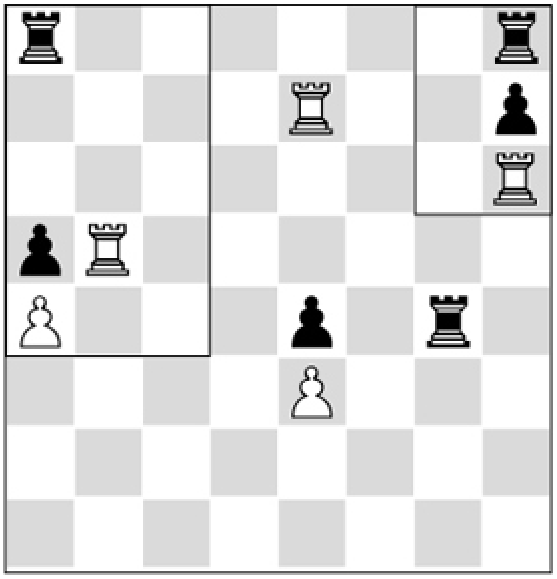
Bridge building followed by establishing a shelter for the royal traveler is a typical component of endgame strategy, and is very closely related to the maneuver that will be discussed in Section 3 below. Incidentally, building a bridge was also featured in our Game 10, where the move ♘f5 fashioned a shelter for the king at f3 (see Diagram 131).

2. The aggressive rook position as a characteristic endgame advantage. Examples and reasoning. The active piece in

general. Tarrasch’s formulation.

If someone should wish to pontificate on a position from the middlegame, claiming that the position in question is otherwise equal but for White’s advantage of an aggressively placed rook, and that this advantage must be decisive, the response of Job the aspirant would call forth the familiar shaking of the head. And in fact, an advantage that is so slight in the middlegame cannot be of decisive effect in this phase of the struggle. It is another matter entirely in the endgame; here such an advantage is of enormous significance. See Diagram 220.

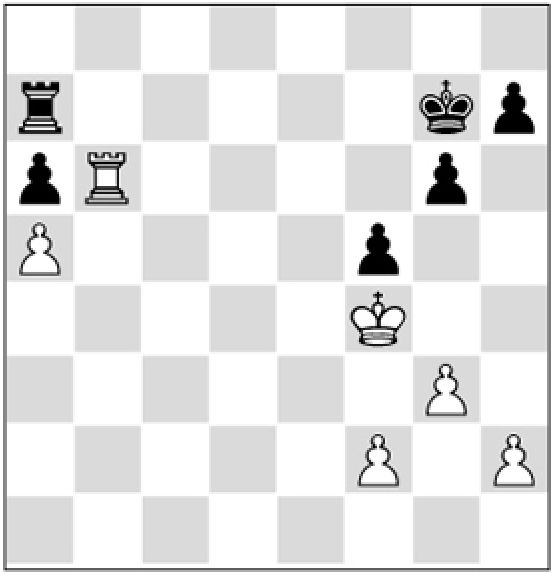
220



The white rook has the aggressive position, the black rook the passive

In the left-hand portion of the diagram, if both sides have pawns on the other wing, White’s rook position can be made the basis of a kingside advance. This is even more true in Diagram 221.

221



The white rook has the aggressive position, the black rook the passive

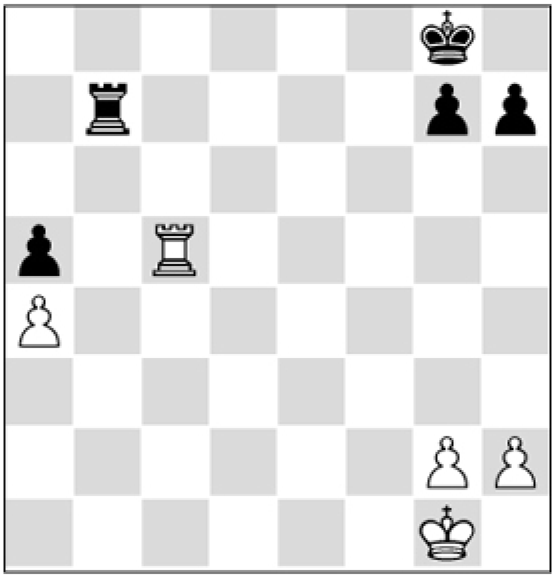
White, with 1.h4 followed at some point by h4-h5 and h5xg6, can expose Black's g-pawn and subject it to attack. And whereas the white rook constitutes the very soul of this new operation, Black's rook cannot muster up enough elasticity to get over to the kingside to work up sufficient counterplay to foil his opponent on that side.

We formulate this as follows: the weakness of the defending rook lies essentially in its relative lack of elasticity in the struggle against the opponent's initiative on the other wing. And further, the white king gains greater freedom to maneuver; in other circumstances he fears the rooks, but as the proverb has it, when the cat's away the mice will play!

In Diagram 221, the threat of the white king to go to b6 (in gradual stages) is by no means to be underestimated.

It is a daily occurrence in games involving master-level players that one of the parties will engage in extended maneuvering and go to immense trouble, merely (as a reward for all his troubles) to seize the aggressive rook position – that is to say, to force his opponent's rook to take up a passive position. Then the active rook enjoys a truly uplifting feeling, just as the prima donna enjoys when she sings the main role in the same production in which her rival has to toil away in a supporting role. And on the other side, it is understandable when such a rival calls in sick and drops the production altogether. We see such a situation in Diagram 222.

222



Black, on the move, says ‘thank you, no’ to the passive rook placement intended for him (1…♖a7) and plays **1…♖b2! 2.♖xa5 ♖a2**. Black’s rook is now quite mobile, and he may be assured of a draw. 1…♖a7 probably would have lost.

After a hard struggle with ourselves and in full knowledge of the responsibilities involved in taking on such difficulties, we offer you the following rule:

RULE: **Faced with the choice of using a rook to protect a pawn and thus condemning it to a passive, very introspective existence, or on the other hand of sacrificing this pawn without hesitation so that the rook can be used in a more active way, it is preferable to opt for the latter alternative.**

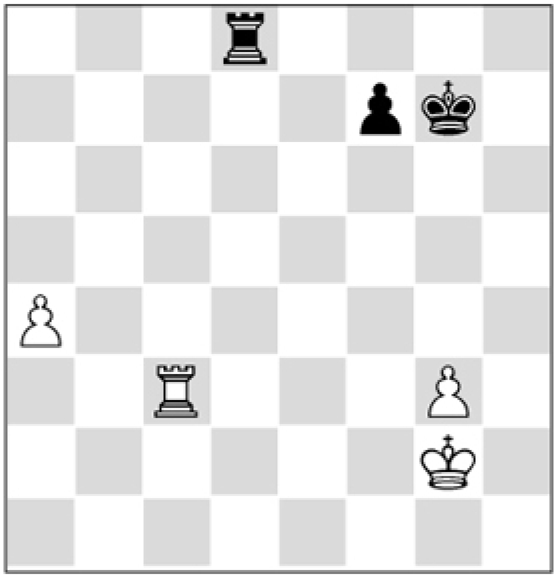
This rule must, as stated, be ‘enjoyed’ with a measure of care. The greater or lesser degree of activity or passivity must in each individual case be examined carefully. It is not our intent to induce a ‘sacrifice-itis’. Sacrifice, but within reason!

When is the position of a rook to be regarded as active with respect to one’s own or the enemy’s pawns? This question has already been answered by Tarrasch, whose excellent formulation is as follows:

The rook belongs behind the passed pawn, either one's own or the enemy's!

Consider Diagram 223:

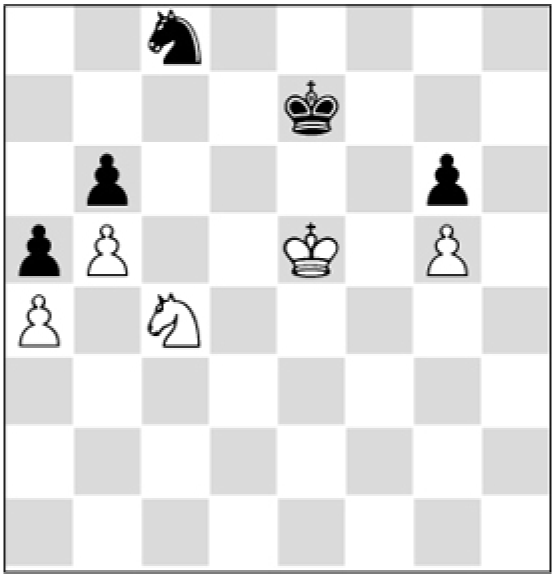
223



White to play should make the aggressive rook move. If it is Black's move, he should find the most enterprising position for his rook

If it is White's move he plays **1.♖a3!**, the placement of the rook behind the pawn. The rook's influence here is enormous, for it breathes some of its own life into the passed pawn. Conversely, if it is Black's move, he should post his rook not in front of the enemy passed pawn (therefore not 1…♖a8? 2.♖a3, when White wins) but rather behind it, hence **1…♖d2+ 2.♔f3 ♖a2**. The rook position thus gained is aggressive (1) in view of the white g-pawn, which might be gobbled up if the chance arises; (2) in view of a possible journey by the white king (for instance, White's king gets to a6, when …♖b2 could box it in or apply a series of checks in case the king should go to b8 or c8).

It is not only in the case of rooks but also in that of minor pieces that a difference in value between an attacking or defending piece weighs heavily in the balance. The weakness of a defending knight lies in the fact that it is dedicated to a single purpose (it has no ability to tack and still hold guard over its appointed square). This singleness of purpose favors the application of *zugzwang*. Consider Diagram 24.



224

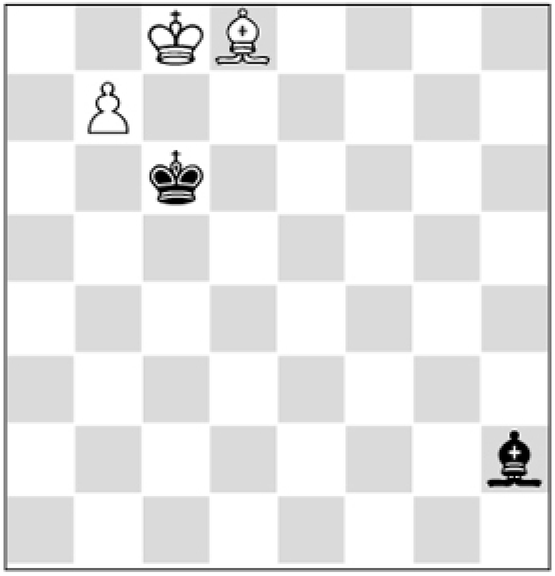
White wins, regardless of who is to move

Black, to move, will succumb to zugzwang. If White is to move – and this is the point – he only apparently suffers from the same malady, as his knight can develop a manifold of threats. White plays **1.♘e3**, when the *zugzwang* passes to Black. Or even 1.♔d5, with the threat ♘e5, etc.

If we shift the whole position back one rank (hence with the white king at e4, the black king at e6, etc.), White would still win.

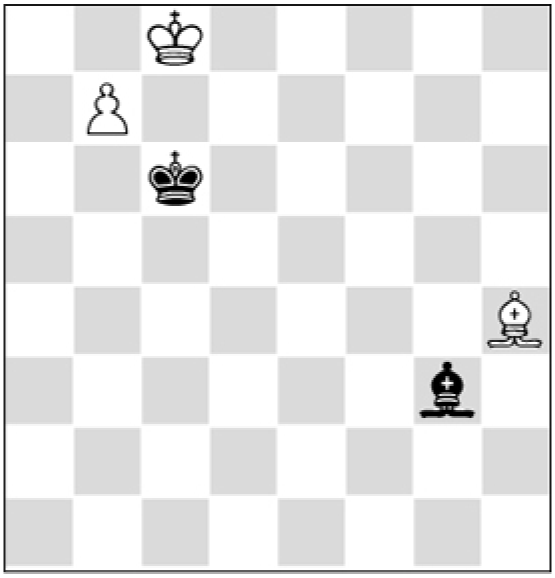
In the case of a defending bishop, one factor is of particular importance, the fact that in terms of its ability to change its front quickly it cannot keep pace with its opposite number – cf. the delightful winning sequence in Diagram 225.

225



In this position the black bishop is the defender; the white bishop threatens to arrive at b8 by way of h4, f2, and a7. But it would appear that this threat can be comfortably parried by a properly timed …♔a6. Hence, **1.♗h4 ♔b5! 2.♗f2 ♔a6!**. If now **3.♗h4**, with the threat ♗d8-c7, the king has time to return to c6. But White plays **3.♗c5!** to force Black to make a move and at the same time preventing …♗d6. **3…♗g3** Now White's bishop goes back in the direction of c7. **4.♗e7 ♔b6! 5.♗d8+ ♔c6 6.♗h4!** (Diagram 226)

226



Black no longer has time for the saving maneuver …♔b5-a6 mentioned earlier. **6…♗h2 7.♗f2** and wins by means of ♗a7-b8; e.g., **7…♗f4 8.♗a7 ♗h2 9.♗b8 ♗g1 10.♗f4 ♗a7 11.♗e3**

3. The rallying of isolated troop detachments and the general advance

Since the two maneuvers just mentioned are so closely connected (the one overlaps and merges with the other, often without our notice), they should be treated together in the same section.

Bringing scattered troop detachments in contact with one another cannot be a difficult task; we only have to know what each piece can do for the others. We know several things; e.g., that the knight can conjure up a ‘bridge’ to provide a ‘shelter’ for the king. We know, too, that this piece can enjoy the hospitality of a pawn (the pawn protecting the knight) and give thanks for this when it is necessary to defend the pawn from one of its ‘kin’ or to lay terrible siege to an enemy pawn. Refer, for example, to the f5-knight in Diagram 131.

We know, further, that the king fills the holes made by its own advancing pawns. And we must not forget that a centrally posted queen can bring widely separated pawns together under one hat (one of the more fashionable hats, of course, as we are speaking here of a queen’s hat! – see Diagram 214). The contact between the white pieces in the position with a king at f3, rook at f4, and pawns on a4 and g3 would not be at all bad.

Again, the advance should proceed as a group! For a passed pawn to suddenly run wild and speed away from its protectors and comrades, as shown in Diagram 172, is definitely an exception to the rule, which in fact may be stated as follows:

RULE: **The advancing pawn should stay in close contact with its own cohorts.**

The place vacated by a pawn advance must be occupied as quickly as possible by a ‘hole-filler’. For instance, e4-e5, and soon thereafter ♘c3-e4 or ♔f3-e4, and many similar examples.

It sometimes happens that an enemy rook seeks to disturb our combined play by annoying checks; in such a case the rook should be rendered harmless or chased back home (see the game Post-Alekhine, Diagram 235).

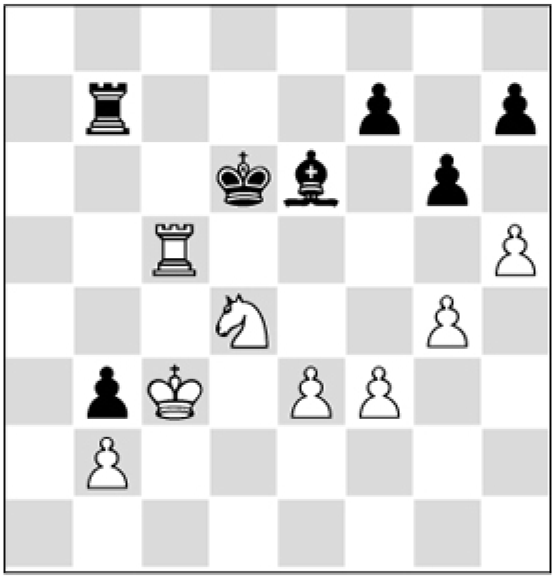
Combined play constitutes eighty percent of all endgame technique. The details we have already discussed, such as centralization, bridge-building, the shelter, hole-filling, are subordinate to the main purpose: combined play. Like the interlocking cogs in a piece of clockwork, they see to it that the mechanism is set in motion, working to guarantee a slow but sure forward movement of the cohesive mass of the army. ‘Advance as a unit!’ – this is the watchword!

The student should get clear in his mind that centralization is possible even on a remote flank. The pieces merely have to group themselves around a pawn as center, when the finest ‘central harmony’ would be an incontestable fact.

4. Materialization of the abstract conception of the file or the rank. An important difference between lineal operations in the middlegame and the same in the endgame.

A peculiar and by no means obvious difference must now be noted: in the middlegame the utilization of an open file requires the expenditure of a considerable amount of energy; it is therefore entirely activistic. We think of the complicated apparatus involved, for instance (in particular) in the case of the outpost knight. In the endgame, however, the lineal operations proceed more simply and – contemplatively. There is no trace of a knight outpost anywhere. The fortunate possessor of an open file bides his time. At most, he sends out a handful of men to clear a space for the advancing rook. Hence: in the middlegame, file operations are activistic, while in the endgame they are contemplative (elegiac, if you will). We should like to illustrate this fact with a few examples.

227



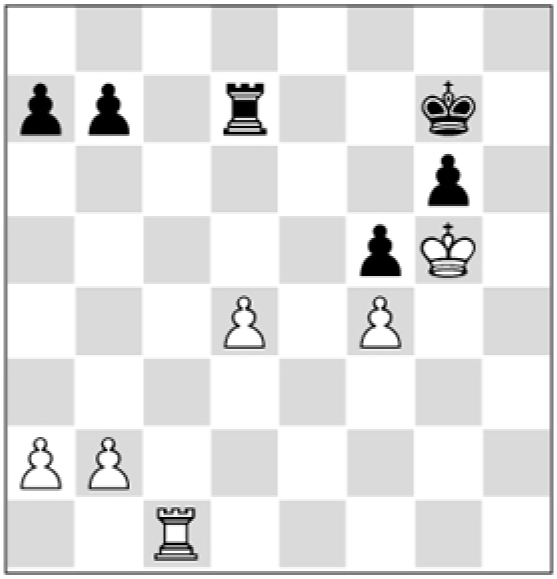
Nimzowitsch-Jacobsen, Copenhagen 1923
‘Materialization’ of the 5th rank

White is in possession of the clear 5th rank. By the following simple series of moves he manages to ‘materialize’ the rather abstract effect of his control of the rank; that is, to consolidate it to a concrete point. The game continued **42.♜c6+! ♚d7 43.hxg6! hxg6 44.♞xe6! fxe6 45.♜c5** followed by ♖g5 and f3-f4. Occupying g5 is of decisive effect – all the more so as the rook will be moved by sympathy to play …♖g7 (the passive rook).

Another example is shown in my ending with Allan Nilsson (Diagram 189). There, scarcely anything happened – at most the white h-pawn made a gesture of wanting to advance – and yet White’s rook succeeded in penetrating to the 8th rank.

Typical also is the course of the game in Diagram 228.

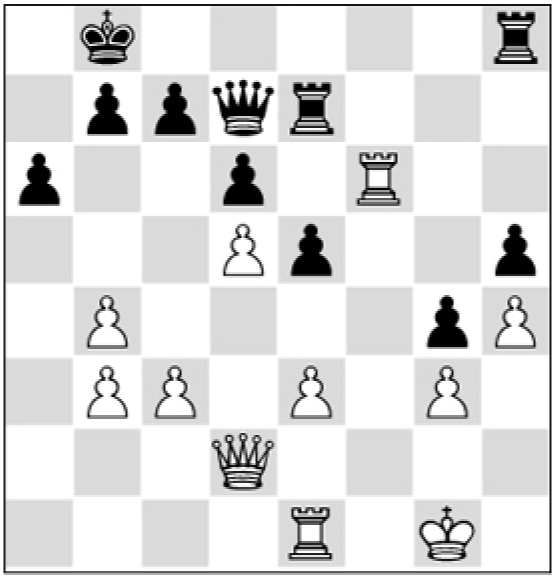
228



White calmly goes for a ‘stroll’: b2-b4, a2-a4, b4-b5, a4-a5, b5-b6, and finally ♖c7. If this threat is parried by …b7-b6, ♖c6 becomes possible (see Diagram 151). The 6th rank has been consolidated to a concrete point (g6).

In Diagram 229, in which White has the f-file and Black seeks to defend along the 7th and 8th ranks, Capablanca won almost automatically through the sheer dead weight of the file.

229

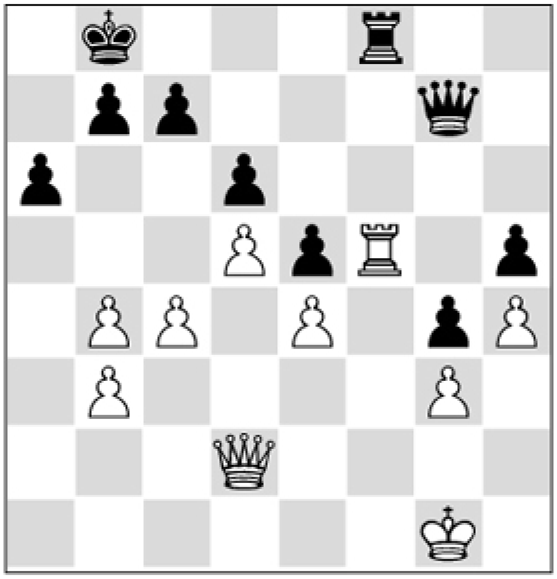


Capablanca-Martinez, Buenos Aires 1914

27.♜ef1 ♜he8 28.e4 ♛b5 29.♜a1! White takes his time, as the f-file must in the end prove crushing due to its own weight! **29…♛d7** White threatened 30.c4 ♕b6+ 31.c5 ♕b5 32.♖a5, with an amusing trapping of the queen. **30.c4 ♜f7 31.♜xf7 ♛xf7 32.♜f1 ♛g7 33.♜f5 ♜f8** (Diagram 230).

34.♛g5! Winning a pawn. **34…♛h8 35.♛xh5 ♛xh5 36.♜xh5 ♜f3 37.♚g2 ♜xb3 38.♜f5**

230



Capablanca-Martinez, Buenos Aires 1914

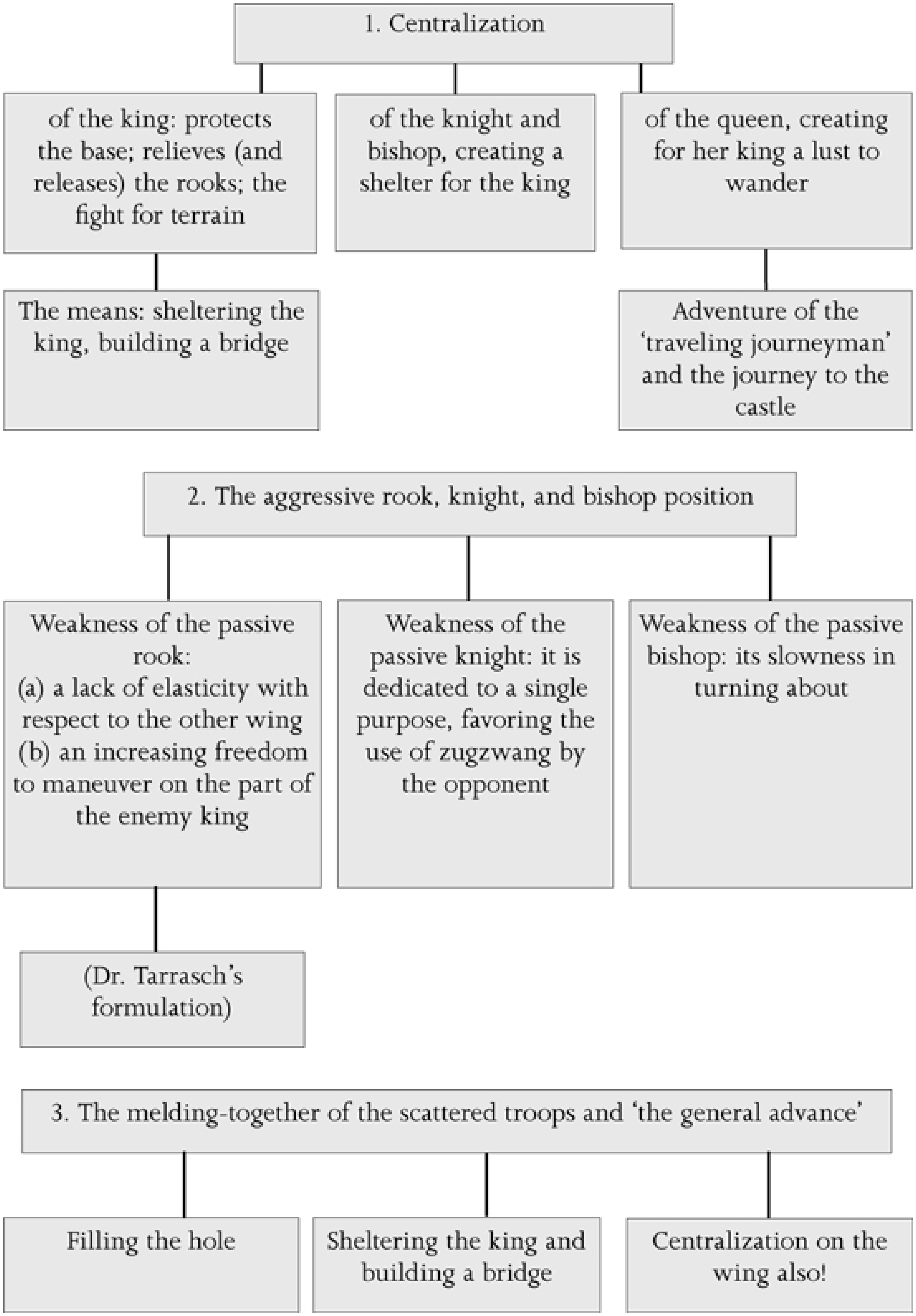
and Black resigned, since the h-pawn cannot be stopped; e.g., 38…♖b2+ 39.♖f2, etc.

The moral application for the student is to be stated as follows:

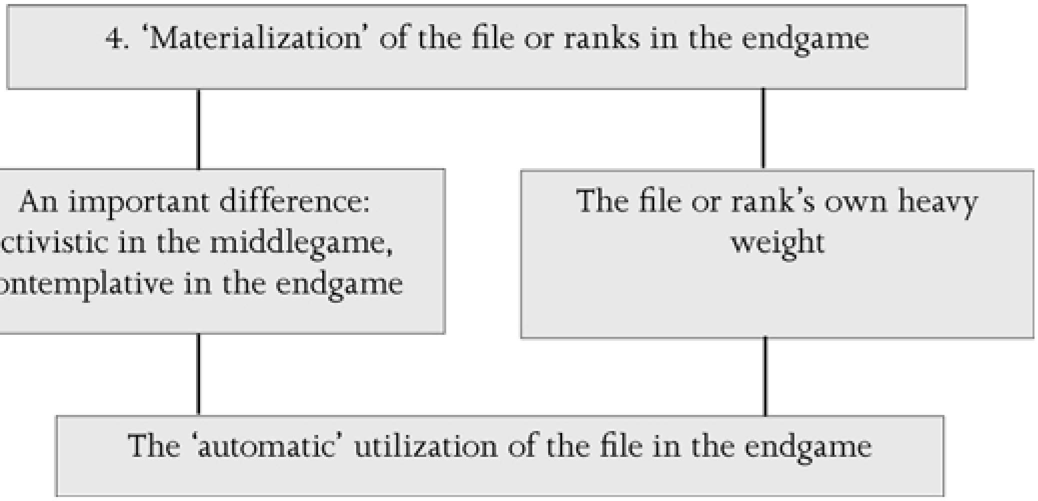
In the endgame the file is in your possession for the duration, so do not worry about a possible breakthrough point, as this will arise in and of itself, almost without any effort on your part.

We now provide you with a schema and a few game conclusions.

A little schema for the ‘Endgame’ or ‘The Four Elements’

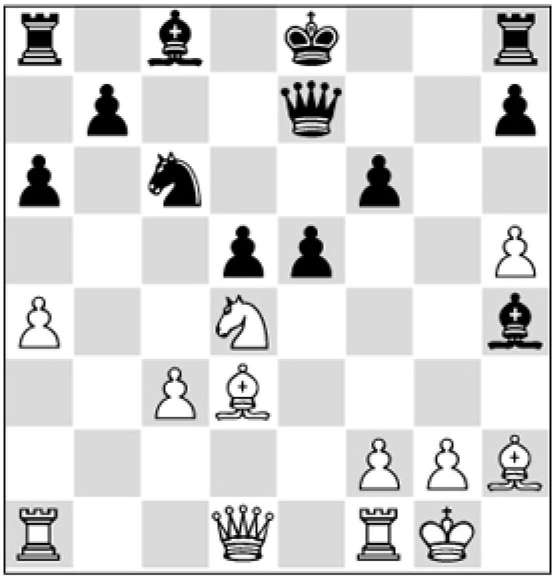


- 1. Centralization
  - of the king: protects the base; relieves (and releases) the rooks; the fight for terrain
    - The means: sheltering the king, building a bridge
  - of the knight and bishop, creating a shelter for the king
  - of the queen, creating for her king a lust to wander
    - Adventure of the ‘traveling journeyman’ and the journey to the castle
- 2. The aggressive rook, knight, and bishop position
  - Weakness of the passive rook: (a) a lack of elasticity with respect to the other wing (b) an increasing freedom to maneuver on the part of the enemy king
    - (Dr. Tarrasch’s formulation)
  - Weakness of the passive knight: it is dedicated to a single purpose, favoring the use of zugzwang by the opponent
  - Weakness of the passive bishop: its slowness in turning about
- 3. The melding-together of the scattered troops and ‘the general advance’
  - Filling the hole
  - Sheltering the king and building a bridge
  - Centralization on the wing also!


4. 'Materialization' of the file or ranks in the endgame
An important difference: activistic in the middlegame, contemplative in the endgame
The file or rank's own heavy weight
The 'automatic' utilization of the file in the endgame

Example 1 (Diagram 231):

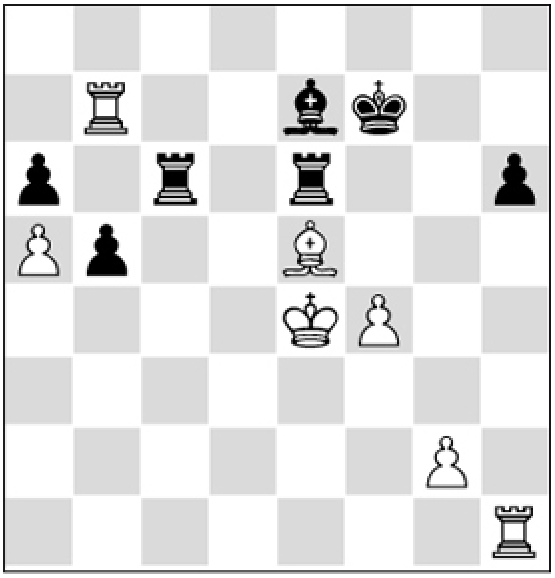
231



Nimzowitsch-Spielmann, San Sebastian 1912

With **20.♗f5! ♘xd4 21.♗xc8 ♖xc8 22.cxd4 0-0 23.dxe5 fxe5 24.♕xd5+ ♕f7 25.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 26.♗xe5** White transitions to the endgame, in which he has a temporary pawn superiority but also a long-term centralized bishop to call his own. There followed **26…♖f5 27.f4 ♖xh5 28.♖ab1 ♗e7**. Spielmann is defending himself with his usual ingenuity. **29.♔f2** Ongoing centralization. **29…b6 30.♔f3 ♖h6 31.♖fd1 ♖c4 32.♖d7 ♔f7 33.a5 b5 34.♖e1 ♖cc6 35.♗d4 ♖he6 36.♖h1 h6 37.♖b7 ♖ed6 38.♗e5 ♖e6 39.♔e4** (Diagram 232)

232

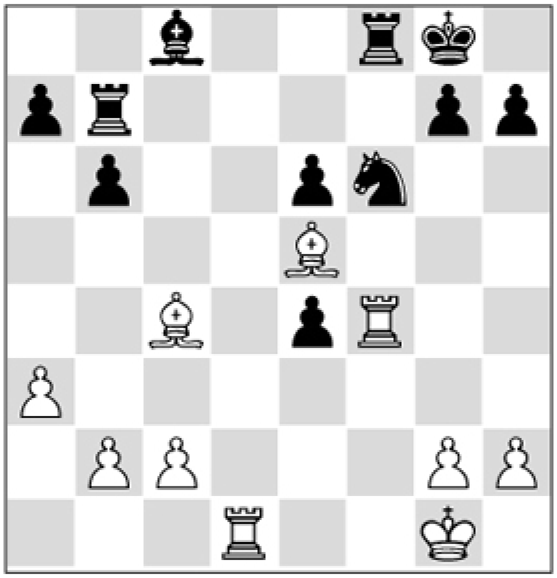


The ‘piece-island’ with king at e4, bishop at e5, and pawn on f4

After the preparatory rook maneuvers – note that the rook at b7 sharply fixes the protected point b6 and that the 7th rank is about to be ‘materialized’ – the black rooks prove themselves sufficiently ‘passive’ as to positively invite further inroads by White’s king. The bishop at e5, the king, and the pawn on f4 now form a central piece-island; the bishop is the bridge-builder and the e4-square is our shelter. **39…♖c4+ 40.♔f5 ♖c5 41.♖d1 b4** There is no salvation. **42.♖d8 ♖xa5 43.♖f8+! ♔xf8 44.♔xe6** and Black resigned.

Example 2 shows another instance of centralization (Diagram 233).

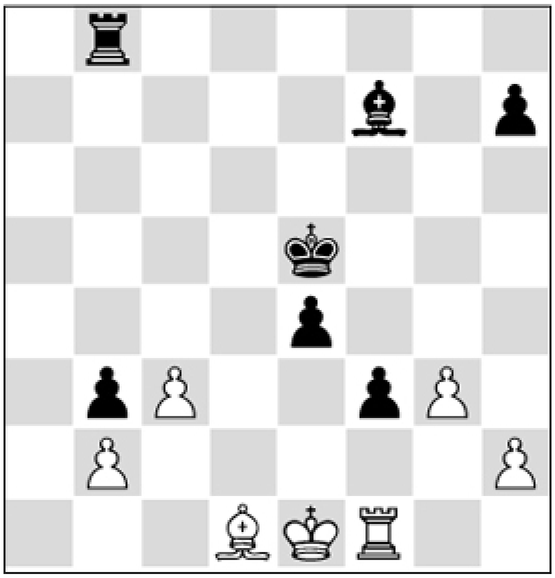
233



Thomas-Nimzowitsch, Marienbad 1925

In his awkward situation Black tried **20…♔f7**. There followed **21.♖e1?** (correct was 21.g4) **21…♔e7 22.♗c3 ♘d5** and after the further moves **23.♖xf8 ♔xf8 24.♗e5** the second player managed to overcome the worst: **24…b5 25.♗b3 ♘f6 26.♔f1 ♔e7**. Now Sir G. Thomas could no longer resist the temptation to recoup a pawn and played **27.♗xf6+ gxf6 28.♖xe4**. When after **28…e5** he exposed his rook with **29.♖h4**, Black got the upper hand and won in powerful centralizing style, as follows: **29…♗f5 30.♔e2 ♗g6 31.♗d5 ♖b8 32.c3 f5 33.♗b3 ♔f6** Note the collective advance of the black ‘central mass’. **34.♗c2 a5!** For the white majority is really a minority, or, if you will, a majority abandoned by all its patron saints (rook and king). **35.♖h3 e4 36.♖h4 b4 37.axb4 axb4 38.♖f4 ♔e5** Filling the hole! **39.♖f1 b3 40.♗d1 f4 41.♔e1 ♗f7 42.g3 f3** (Diagram 234)

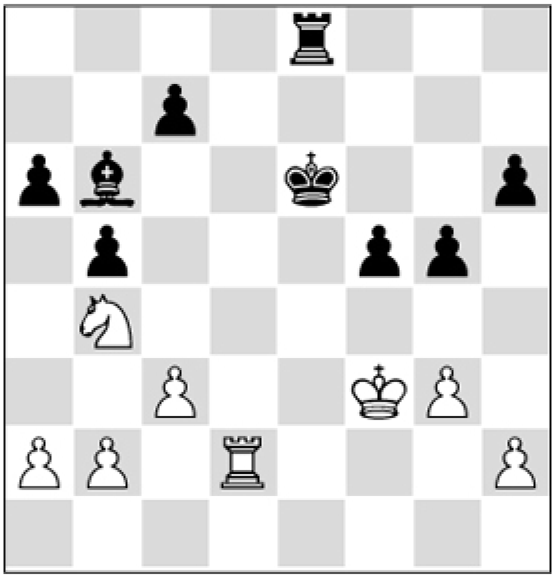
234



White’s position has been completely invested. There followed the sacrifice **43.♗xf3 exf3 44.♖xf3** and Black won after a hard struggle through his preponderance of material.

Example 3 (see Diagram 235).

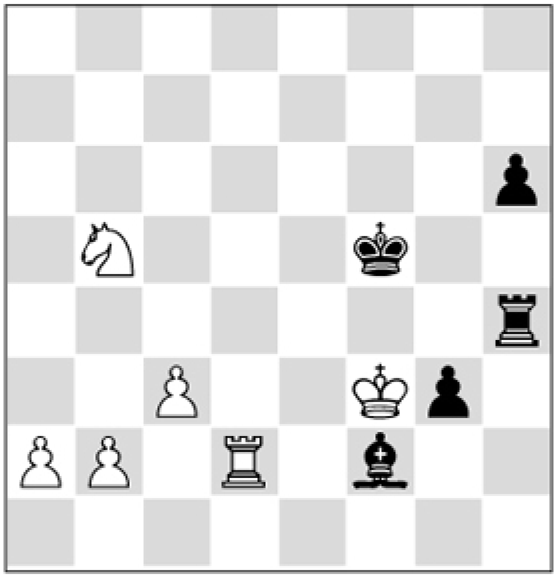
235



Post-Alekhine, Mannheim 1914

An endgame very rich in combinations. In this game, the gifted and imaginative Franco-Russian would appear to want to sweep away the rules of my system by a storm wind of exuberant inspiration. This, however, is only apparently the case. In reality, everything is carried out according to the system and centralization. **40…g4+** The ‘candidate’ f-pawn remains behind, but what we are dealing with here is a sacrificial combination. **41.♚g2** 41.♔f4? ♔f6, with mating threats. **41…♚f7 42.♞xa6 ♜e1 43.h4 ♚g6! 44.♞b4 f4! 45.gxf4 ♜g1+ 46.♚h2 g3+ 47.♚h3 ♝f2** Now, the pawn, rook, and bishop have been melded into a whole. But this ‘whole’ has (for the moment, at least) little possibility of expansion. **48.♚g4** The threat was 48…♖h1+ 49.♔g4 ♖xh4+!, etc. **48…♜h1 49.f5+ ♚f6 50.♞d5+ ♚e5 51.♚f3 ♚xf5 52.♞xc7 ♜xh4 53.♞xb5** (Diagram 236)

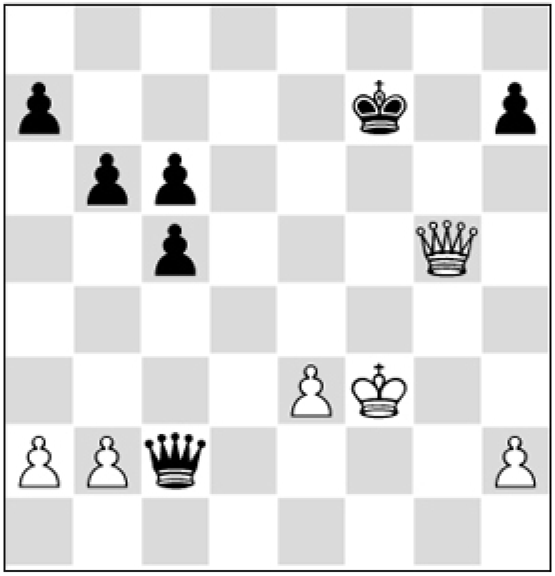
236



Black has given away his entire queenside. With what justification? Well, because after the fall of the white h4-pawn the black pawns’ lust to expand (which before had been lacking) is now present in abundance (see the note to the 47th move): the two united passed pawns, with the help of the king filling the holes, ‘bite on’ any resistance, rendering it out of commission. **53…♜f4+ 54.♚g2 h5! 55.♜d8 h4! 56.♜f8+.** The rook is looking to stop Black’s combined play. **56…♚g5 57.♜g8+** 57.♖xf4? ♔xf4, followed by …♔g4, etc. **57…♚h5 58.♜h8+ ♚g6 59.♜e8** In order after his opponent’s …♗c5 to safeguard his base against the threat …♖f2+. **59…♝c5 60.♜e2 ♚f5** The ‘filler’ approaches! **61.b4 ♝b6 62.♚h3 ♜f2 63.♞d6+ ♚f4 64.♜e4+ ♚f3 65.♚xh4 ♝d8+! 66.♚h5 ♜h2+ 67.♚g6** The white pieces are all ‘away’; the house stands desolate and abandoned… **67…g2** and White resigned.

In Example 4 let us follow a king in its wanderings, which interest us in so far as they proceed under the protectorate of the centralized queen. See Diagram 237.

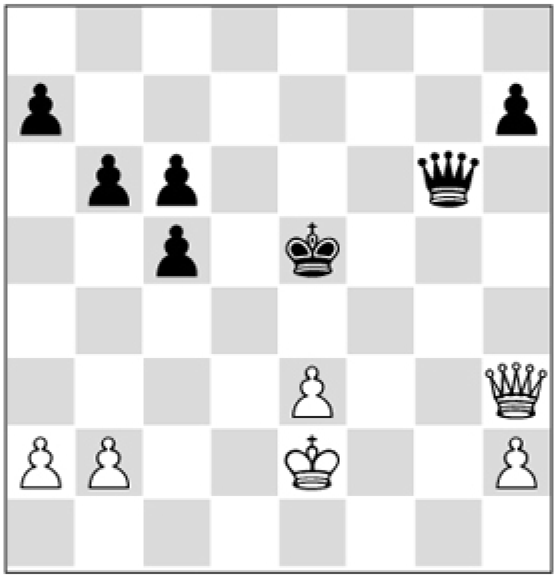
237



E. Cohn-Nimzowitsch (Munich 1906)

The game continued **39.♛e5 ♛d1+ 40.♚f2 ♛d5**. The fight for the most central squares. **41.♛f4+ ♚g6!** The start of the wandering, in the first place threatening 42…♕f5. **42.♚e1 ♛f5! 43.♛g3+ ♚h5 44.♛g7 ♛e4!** The black king is gearing up for a trip to either h2 or e3 (see Diagram 214). **45.♛f7+ ♚g4 46.♛g7+** Or 46.♕d7+ ♔h4!. **46…♛g6 47.♛d7+ ♚f3 48.♛h3+ ♚e4!** Our ideal frontal position! **49.♚e2 ♚e5!**

238



Now that the king has gone to such pains to reach e4, he retires, with a threat: 50…♕c2+. The point of the maneuver consists in the time-gaining move …c5-c4, forcing the white queen to constantly protect d3. How the king, to be free of the checks, now maneuvers in flight to e7, and the queenside pawns carry out their inexorable advance, is just as interesting as it is instructive. **50.♔d2 c4 51.♕f1 ♕e4 52.♕e2 ♔d6 53.♕f1 ♔e7 54.♕e2 b5 55.♕f1 a5 56.♕g1 ♕d5+ 57.♔c2 b4 58.♕f2 ♕e4+ 59.♔c1 a4 60.♕g3 b3 61.axb3 cxb3 62.♕c7+ ♔e6 63.♕c8+ ♔d5 64.♕d7+ ♔c4 65.♕f7+ ♔d3** and White resigned.

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Chapter 7

The Pinned Piece

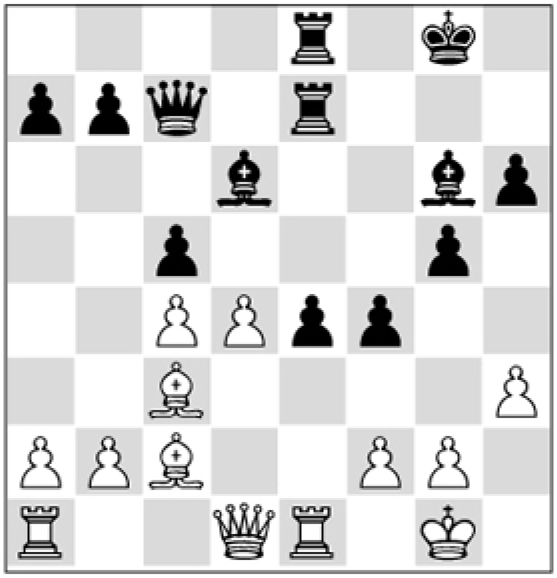
1. Introduction and general remarks. Tactics or strategy. On the possible re-activation of a pin motif that has been discontinued. The parable of the unpinned passed pawn.

After the quite difficult (in the positional sense) 6th chapter, this 7th chapter may seem ‘all too easy.’ And perhaps the question may be asked whether the pinned piece can even be spoken of as an element in our sense, for a game can be based on an open file or a passed pawn, but on a pin?! This viewpoint we cannot share. It is true that pins usually occur in purely tactical moments, as, for example, in the pursuit of a fleeing enemy; and yet, a pin foreseen in the layout of a position may, on the other hand, logically influence the whole rest of the game. It should be remarked in this connection that the pin need not be in effect over a long span of moves. A pin lasting only a short time – indeed, the mere specter of such a pin – may in and of itself be sufficient to cause the opponent to make weak moves, so it continues to have an ‘after-effect’ all the way into the endgame.

In this sense, the following example game merits our particular interest. It is concerned with a pin motif that appears all of a sudden, then vanishes just as quickly. After that, another twenty moves or so are played, when the game heads into a phase of the most solid positional play. Instead of the volatile adventures of a temporary pin, a positional advantage – the e-file – determines the proceedings on the board for many moves. Here along this file he has settled down, and that ‘restless episode’ has disappeared completely from his memory. And then it happens: that almost forgotten adventure suddenly reappears, poisons his imagination with restless dreams, causes his domestic happiness to appear to him as stale and uninteresting, and threatens to blast his petty but securely established world – the world of the well-established citizen and happy pater familias – into the air…

Here is the game (see also Game 5): **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♞f3 ♝d6 5.♝d3 ♞f6 6.h3 0-0 7.0-0 h6** and the pin motif ♗g5 or …♗g4 would seem to be dead and buried. The game continued: **8.♞c3 c6 9.♞e2 ♜e8** (play on the e-file) **10.♞g3 ♞e4 11.♞h5 ♞d7 12.c3 ♞df6 13.♞h2 ♛c7 14.♞xf6+ ♞xf6 15.♞f3 ♞e4 16.♝c2 ♝f5 17.♞h4 ♝h7 18.♝e3 g5 19.♞f3 f5 20.♜e1 ♜e7 21.♞d2 f4 22.♞xe4 dxe4 23.♝d2 ♜ae8 24.c4 c5 25.♝c3 ♝g6**

239



Von Haken-Giese, Riga 1913

This last move by Black signifies the reactivation of the pin motif, for now Black threatens a properly timed forward march against the target of attack at h3 with …h6-h5 and …g5-g4. White’s 6.h3 was intended as a defense in the face of the threatened pin, and therefore stands in a logical connection with that motif.

Accordingly, the attack on h3 should be thought of as a logical variation on the same theme: the pin motif. In other words, the advance against h3 amounted to the reactivation of the pin motif that had been deactivated since the 6th move.

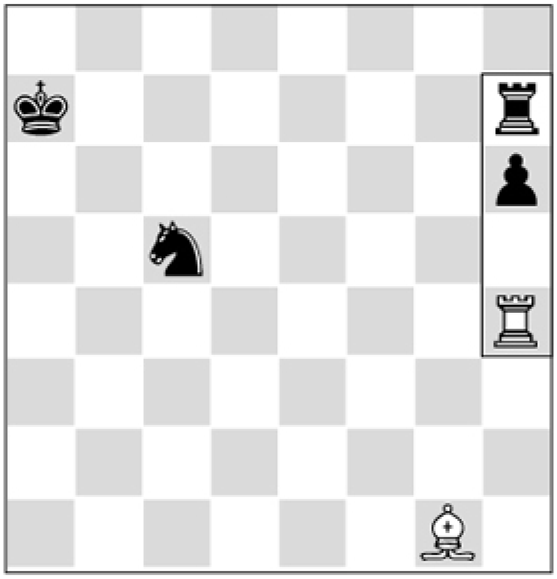
The rest of the game has for the time being no further interest for us; the full score can be found in Game 5. The student who plays over the game will be satisfied that Black did not pursue the adventure involved in (or rather resumed by) the move 25…♗g6, but repentantly returned to his e-file play, and virtue prevailed. But this is unimportant, for it easily could have happened otherwise. What was of importance in this example is that we became familiar with the great strategic consequences of the pin motif.

2. The concept of the wholly and the half-pinned piece. The protection afforded by a pinned piece is only imaginary! Let a player show his manly courage and undauntedly place his own piece on such a ‘protected’ (?) square. The winning of the pining enchained piece. Exchange combinations on the pinning square (the square on which the pinned piece stands) and the two underlying and distinct motives for such combinations.

There are three actors involved in every pin:
(1) the pinning piece;
(2) the pinned enemy piece;
(3) the piece standing behind the pinned piece.

The pinning piece attacks the piece behind through the pinned piece. That is, the pinned piece stands in the way between the pinning piece and the piece behind. The piece standing behind is usually of noble blood, that is, a king or queen, for otherwise it would not hide itself so fearfully behind another piece. All three actors stand either on the same file or on the same diagonal (see Diagram 240).

240



The ♖h4 is pinning the h6-pawn; the ♗g1 is pinning the ♘c5 (wholly). The pieces ‘standing behind’ are the ♖h7 and the ♔a7 respectively.

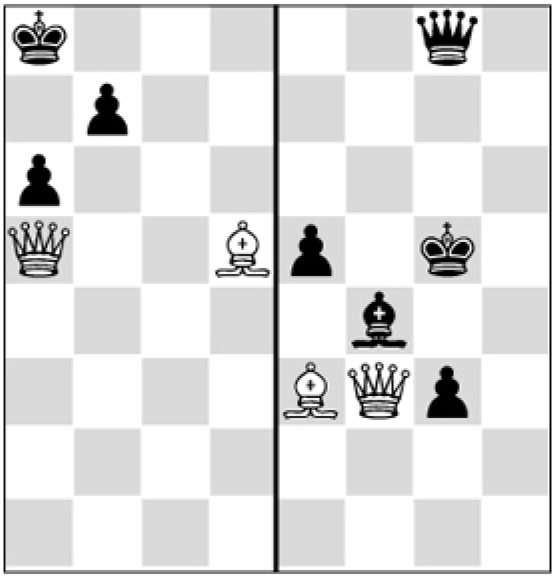
The pinned piece dare not move, since if it did the piece behind it would be subject to an attack that it had been screened from before. If this immobility is absolute, that is, if the pinned piece may make no move of any kind whatever, we are dealing with a piece that is wholly pinned. If, however, there are a few squares available to the pinned piece in the line of the pin, we then speak of a ‘half-pin.’ In Diagram 240 the pin by the rook is a ‘half-pin,’ as the move …h6-h5 is available.

A pinned knight is always wholly pinned. Of the other pieces we may say: A colleague from the same faculty, that is, a piece that moves about the board in the same way, can only be half-pinned.

Example: White has a bishop on h1, Black has a bishop on c6 and a king at b7. Here, the c6-bishop is only half-pinned; it may move back and forth along the diagonal from c6 to h1. A pawn can only be wholly pinned diagonally or horizontally; if the pin is vertical, the pinning piece must block the pinned pawn (e.g., White with a rook at g6; Black with a pawn on g7 and a king at g8) to achieve complete immobility. But this immobility would have little to do with the pin as such, as it could just as well be the result of the blockade.

A pinned piece’s defensive ability is only imaginary! It merely acts as though it would offer such defense. In reality, it is restrained and immobile. Hence we may confidently place one of our own pieces en prise to a piece we have pinned: the pinned piece may not grab hold of it. An example of this can be seen in Diagram 241:

241



Right: 1.♕xg3+, winning the queen
Left: 1.♕xa6+ and mate next move

The winning moves 1.♕xg3+ and 1.♕xa6+ are easy to find. We just need to establish that the bishop at f4 and the pawn on b7 are pinned; if so, the ‘otherwise’ protected points (g3 and a6) are in fact completely unprotected.

So, let us look for the ‘otherwise’ protected points and justly declare them outlaws!

How easy this is! And yet the less-experienced amateur would be more willing to stick his head inside the jaws of a lion than put his queen en prise! O this veneration of the ancestral rights! Courage! Courage! The pinned piece is in fact powerless! And is it not one of the most magnificent virtues of the citizen to display courage where there is really no danger?

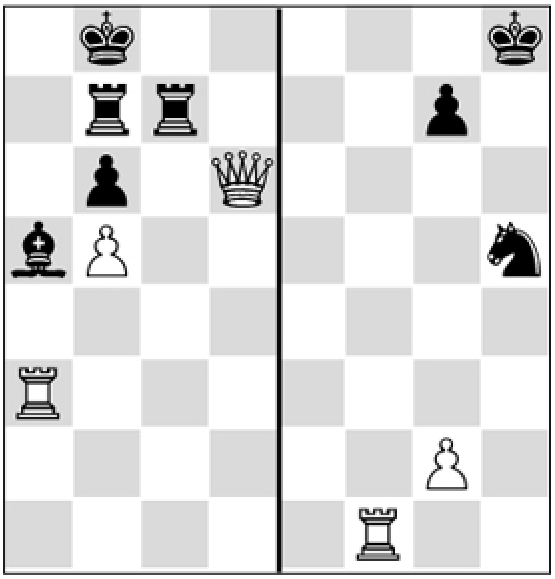
It is very often profitable to play for the win of a pinned piece. To us, who know that every immobile (and even every weakly restrained) piece tends to become a weakness, this fact does not cause surprise. But parallel with the task of winning the pinned piece runs that of preventing this piece from becoming unpinned; for if this were to occur its mobility would be restored, and with it its strength as well.

Apart from the fact that the possibility of such an unpinning must always be kept in mind, the effort to win the pinned piece proceeds along familiar lines, hence by piling up attacks on it and, in the case of adequate protection, decimating its defenders! (See Chapter 2, Section 4.)

But an absolute plus may be recorded, namely in those cases where an attack on a pinned piece is undertaken by a pawn and hence proves decisive.

That this must be so follows from the fact that a piece can escape an attack by a pawn only by taking flight. But if the piece is pinned, it is defenseless against an assault by a pawn, since flight is simply impossible. See Diagram 242.

242

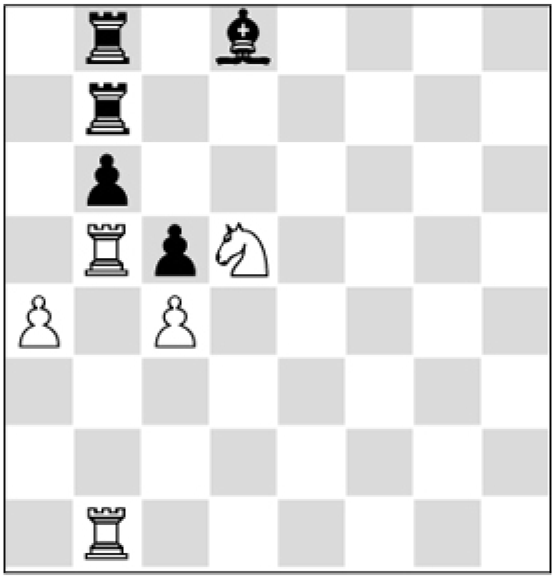


Two elementary examples of the win of a pinned piece by a pawn attack

On the right, the play is **1.♖h1 g6** and now the foot soldier makes a move: **2.g4**. On the left, the pawn has a harder time getting at the piece; there are a few obstacles he must ‘nudge aside.’ This is done by **1.♖xa5 bxa5 2.b6** and wins.

In general, the plan of attack against a pinned piece is such that we have to go to the greatest trouble to acquire that preponderance in material that we have specified in greater detail on various occasions, namely a majority of attackers in opposition to the defenders of the objective under contention (in this instance, the objective is the pinned piece). We go to the greatest trouble, as stated; but we regard as ideal the pawn attack, which, as is often the case, will crown the whole enterprise. Let us consider for example Diagram 243.

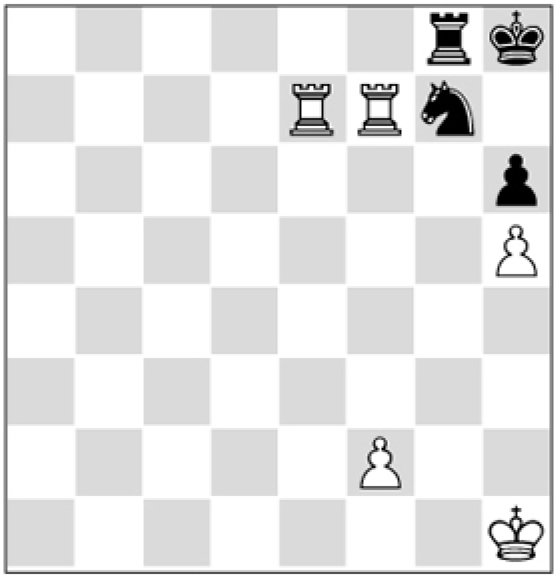
243



A pawn attack after a preliminary neck massage, carried out by pieces

In this position it is readily apparent that an intensive siege of the pinned b6-pawn has been undertaken. We may say that the (ideal) result of this investment can already be noted in the passive positions of the black defenders. But now the pawn goes forward, and this advance leads to a more tangible result.

244



The f-pawn is carrying a dagger in his robe

In Diagram 244, the knight is in a miserable pin at g7; the ‘screened piece’ corresponds to the mate threat at h7. By the advance of the h-pawn White has prevented an unpinning by …♚h7-g6.

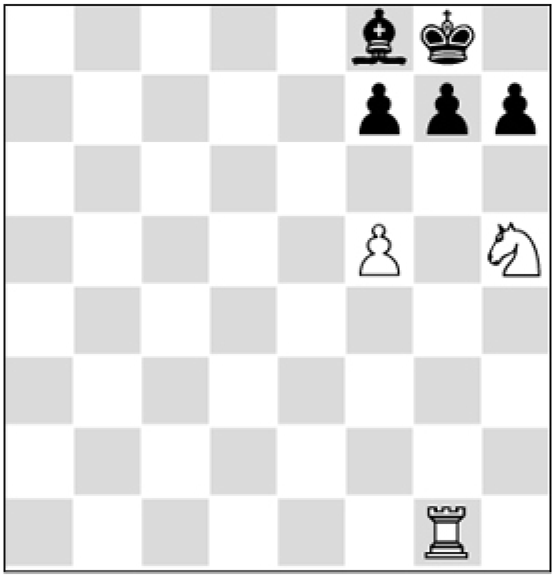
The pressure that is being exerted on the pinned knight only by pieces is quite palpable, but it does not lead to any immediate result. But now the f-pawn moves forward, carrying a dagger in his cloak, and this decides matters.

So, the ‘officers’ apply pressure (which is sometimes enough to win material, since an officer is after all no one to trifle with), but it is and will remain the foot soldier who really carries out the death sentence.

The exchange combination on the pinning square

The first motif. See Diagram 245.

245



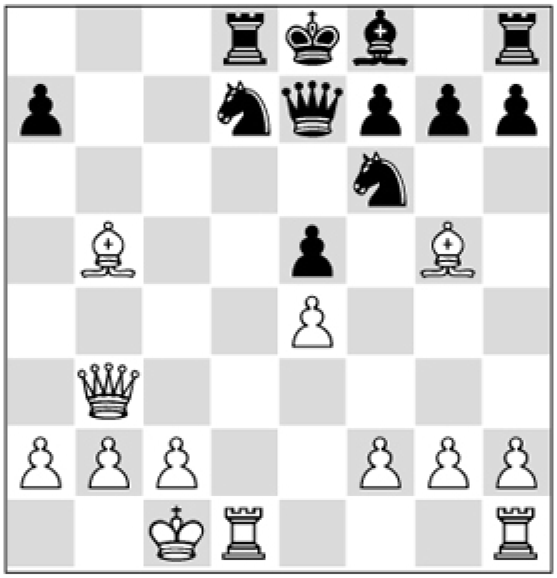
The exchange combination: first motif

Here we might consider winning the pinned g7-pawn. We ‘pile up’ attacks on it (a preponderance of 3:2 has already been achieved!), but then we are disappointed when the pawn in question crisply and jauntily advances (…g7-g6). The scallywag was not in fact pinned, it was at most ‘half-pinned’ (…g7xf6 and …g7xh6 would be impossible, but not …g7-g6). The problem of winning the objective is nevertheless easy to solve, and indeed by **1.♘xg7 ♝xg7 2.f6**. The idea here is that White substitutes the wholly pinned bishop on g7 for the half-pinned pawn on g7. This exchange-substitution is the first motif.

But we still have to settle the tricky problem of why White, despite the surrender of one of his attacking pieces, was able to maintain his preponderance against g7. In point of fact, before ♘xg7 White had three attackers: rook, knight, and the f5-pawn, which is ready to jump in at any time; Black had two defenders, the king and bishop. After ♘xg7, however, White had only two attackers, while Black seemingly had not suffered any loss. The faultiness in this reasoning lies in this final passage. It is true that the two defenders, king and bishop, are still on the board, but at this point the bishop is anything but a defender of g7; instead, it has become an object of attack itself. Hence the manipulation **1.♘xg7 ♝xg7** has rendered harmless both an attacker and a defender, so it seems clear that the status quo remains unchanged.

The second motif. In the game **Morphy-Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard**, after the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.dxe5 ♗xf3 5.♕xf3 dxe5 6.♗c4 ♘f6 7.♕b3 ♕e7 8.♘c3 c6 9.♗g5 b5 10.♘xb5 cxb5 11.♗xb5+ ♘bd7** the knight found itself in a most alarming pin. There now followed **12.0-0-0** This move constitutes the quickest way to bring both rooks to the d-file in the attack against d7. **12…♖d8**

246



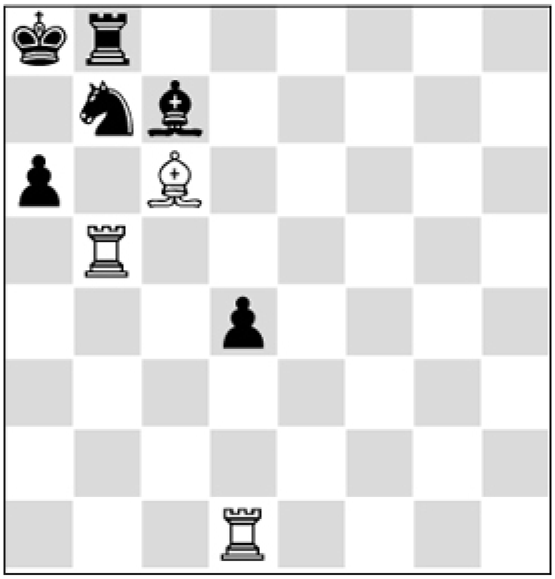
The second motif

In this position, the simple doubling of the rooks would win the knight; e.g., 13.♖d2 ♕e6 14.♖hd1 ♗e7 15.♗xf6. But Morphy has a much stronger maneuver at his disposal: **13.♖xd7 ♖xd7 14.♖d1** This ‘exchange combination’ on the pin-square deserves our attention. Did it take place in order to, perhaps, replace a half-pinned piece with a wholly pinned one? No, for the d7-knight was in fact wholly pinned. Would it have followed if the rook already stood on d2? No, then the combination would not have been necessary, for the doubling would have been powerful enough. The exchange combination was clearly carried out in order to gain a tempo in the fight for d7.

Let us consider at our leisure the state of affairs before and after 13.♖xd7. Before 13.♖xd7 White had two attackers against two real defenders, as the knight on f6 is half dead, and the queen is too great a

personage and would cut a poor figure in a brawl against minor pieces. After 13.♖xd7 White loses an attacker, which, however, he immediately replaces with a new one, while Black irrevocably loses the defender at d8 (see our ‘tricky question’ above). White has accordingly reaped a profit of one fighting unit and as such has secured a preponderance of forces in his struggle over the pinned piece. The second motif, then, consists of a gain of tempo. After **14…♛e6** 15.♗xf6 would have won easily. Morphy preferred the more elegant method **15.♝xd7+! ♞xd7**, for now the knight is ‘pinned’ due to the potential mate threat on d8. But it is now forced to move, whereupon mate follows: **16.♛b8+ ♞xb8 17.♜d8#**
In Diagram 247 the pinning rook is under attack.

247

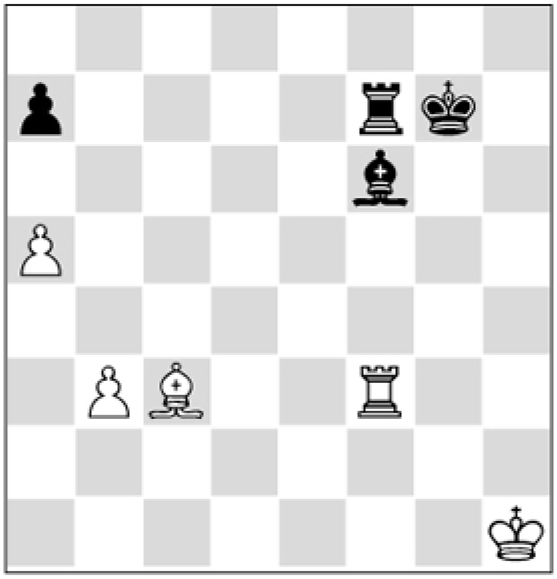


The second motif

Withdrawing it would give the opponent the tempo needed to get rid of the pin, for example by 1.♖b2 ♔a7 2.♖db1 ♘d6. Correct is **1.♜xb7 ♜xb7** and now **2.♜b1** and wins. Inasmuch as the sacrifice on b7 was made only to avoid the loss of a tempo, we must recognize here the presence of the second motif.

The two motifs can also occur together in one combination. Consider Diagram 248.

248

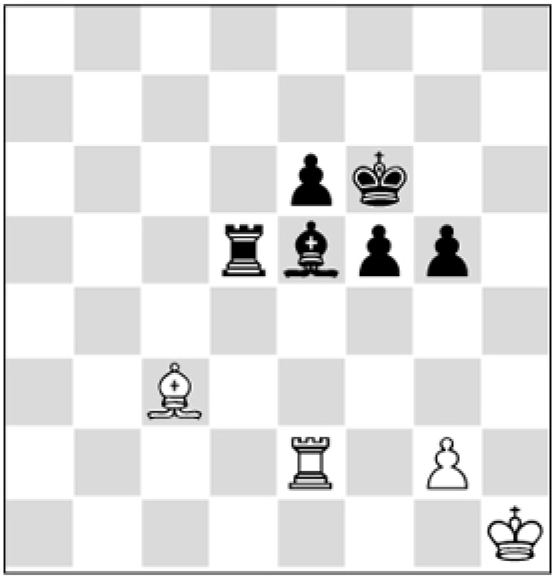


Motifs one and two combined

Here a wholesale exchange is clearly indicated; but after 1.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 2.♖xf6 ♔xf6 3.b4 ♔e5 Black’s king would arrive just in time. It is necessary therefore to bring about the exchanges more cleverly. This is achieved by **1.♜xf6! ♜xf6 2.b4**, for now Black has to lose time with his king – a tempo that is absorbed by the ensuing king move and thus loses all its effectiveness. After **2…♚f7 3.♝xf6 ♚xf6 4.b5** the pawn can no longer be overtaken. A tempo-winning combination, we might say. Quite right, but this tempo win was achieved in such a way that we were able to replace the half-pinned bishop with the wholly pinned rook. All told, it is a blending of the two motifs.

We shall conclude this section with an example that will show us the utilization of the pin with the aid of the justly popular *zugzwang* motif. That a pin can easily lead to a shortage of available moves is obvious, for often enough the elasticity of the pieces protecting the pinned piece is very slight; in fact, it sometimes happens that the protection is entirely unidirectional – that is, a piece can offer protection only from its own solitary square. See Diagram 249.

249



From an odds game by Dr. Tarrasch. The pin exploited by the use of zugzwang

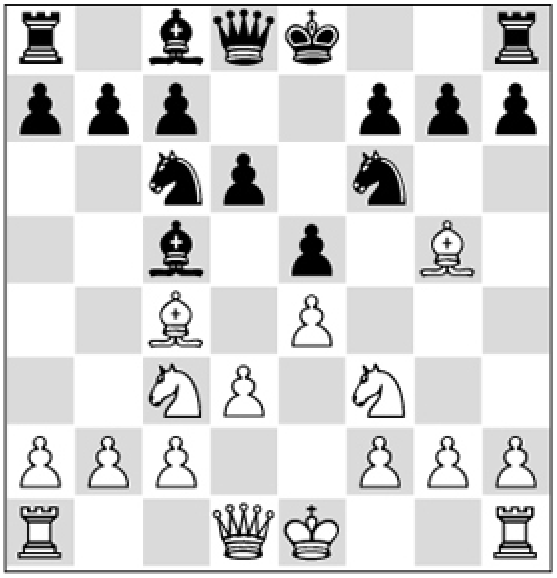
After the initial sacrifice which we have so often discussed (the first motif), therefore after the moves **1.♖xe5 ♖xe5** there follows **2.g3!**. Without this move …f5-f4 could provide some air for the black king; but now 2…f4 would fail to 3.g4, when Black succumbs due to the unidirectional quality of his protection of the rook at e5. After 2…g4 Black would similarly be in a tight squeeze.

With this we have exhausted the subject of play against the pinned piece, at least in its essentials. We now proceed to the subject of ‘unpinning.’

3. The problem of unpinning: in the build-up of one’s game, and in the heat of battle. The politics of the ‘corridor system’ and the ‘military alliance of the beleaguered parties.’ ‘Putting the question’, its meaning, dangers, and deeper significance. Is the longing for an immediate unpinning imbued with the ‘pseudo-classical’ spirit?

After the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6** White can ‘pin’ with **6.♗g5** (Diagram 250).

250



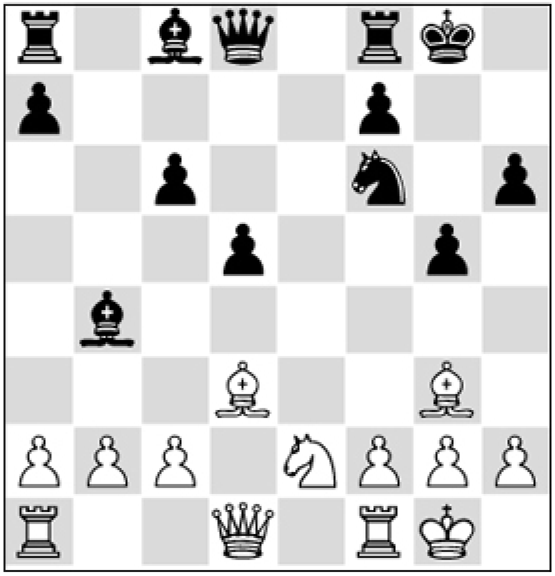
The problem of unpinning. The position after 6.♗g5

Curiously enough, this simple little pin conjures up a whole primeval forest of possibilities. Should Black put the question to the cheeky bishop at once (with 6…h6 7.♗h4 g5) or should he on the contrary impose upon himself the greatest restraint and with an unembarrassed smile play 6…♗e6? Or should he even risk a counter-pinning move (6…♗g4)? In the end, may it perhaps seem appropriate to ignore the threat involved with the pinning move 6.♗g5 (that is, 7.♘d5 and ripping open the kingside with ♘xf6 or ♗xf6) in order calmly to ‘centralize’ with 6…♘d4? Incidentally, 6…♘a5 also comes into consideration, and even 6…0-0 is not to be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. In the discussion that follows we shall seek to review the most important unpinning methods, each in turn.

(a) Putting the question

It will be clear without further explanation that the premature advance of the wing pawns must have a compromising effect. In the Scotch Game, to give an example, after **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗b4 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♗d3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 c6 11.♘e2**, Black follows up with **11…h6 12.♗h4 g5?**. After **13.♗g3** (Diagram 251)

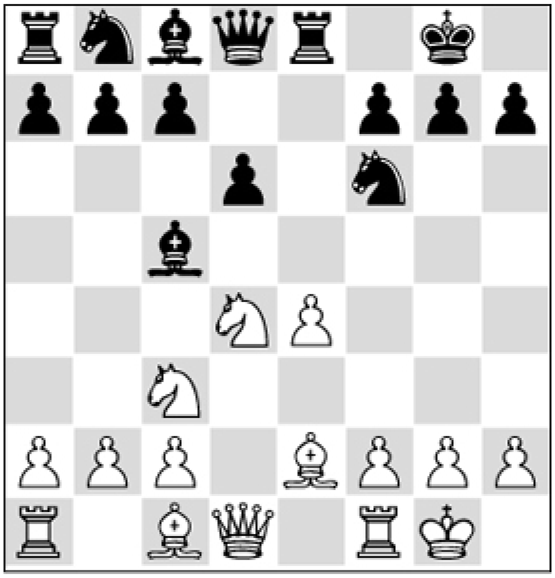
251



White has an attack with f2-f4 and the possibility of occupying the weak points h5 and (especially) f5 that have become weak thanks to …g7-g5 (pawn protection with …g7-g6 will be forever lacking). ‘Putting the question’ was therefore grievously unsuitable.

On the other hand, putting the question can be entirely appropriate. See, for example, the following opening of a tournament game, **E.Cohn-Nimzowitsch**: **1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♝c5 3.♘f3 d6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♞f6 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♜e8** (Diagram 252)

252



Black has given up the center, but he has pressure against the e4-pawn. **8.♝g5?** Correct was 8.♗f3. **8…h6! 9.♝h4 g5! 10.♝g3 ♞xe4** To win this important pawn Black accepted the loosening of his position (in the sense of Chapter 1, Section 7a). There followed **11.♞xe4 ♜xe4 12.♞b3 ♝b6 13.♝d3 ♝g4! 14.♛d2 ♜e8**, and after …♘c6 and …♕f6 Black's position was consolidated (the d6-pawn, in particular, appeared to be stable). Black won easily.

We have intentionally offered two extreme cases so that we may see what is really involved in 'putting the question.' We come to the conclusion that 'putting the question' loosens one's position and should therefore be undertaken only if there is offsetting compensation.

One such form of compensation tends to lie in the fact that the bishop that has been driven off finds itself in a desert. Such a desert will, however, be transformed into a flowering garden if the center can be opened. The examples that follow will make this point clear.

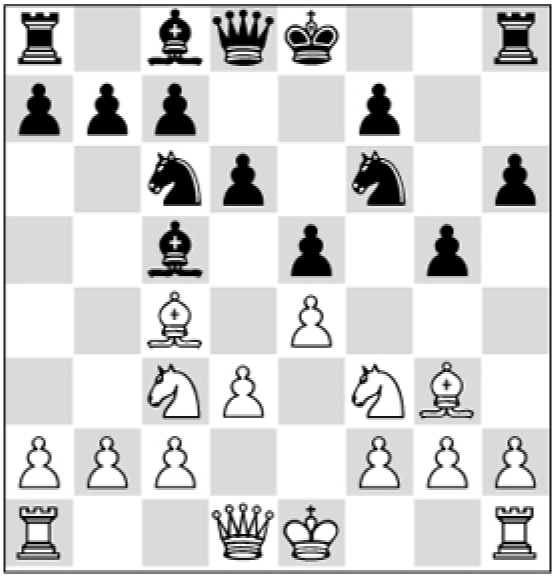
After **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♝b5 ♝b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.♝xc6 dxc6 7.d3 ♝g4 8.h3 ♝h5 9.♝g5** (the immediate 9.g4 would be a mistake because of 9…♘xg4 10.hxg4 ♗xg4 and …f7-f5) **9…♛d6 10.♝xf6 ♛xf6**, the move 11.g4 is entirely correct, for the black bishop will go to g6, where it will bite on the unshakeable pawn mass on e4 and d3. (If Black still had his d-pawn – that is, a pawn on d6 rather than c6 – this desert could have been given life with …d6-d5.)

Certainly, the bishop on g6 can eventually be brought to f7 by means of …f7-f6, but that takes time. White, on the other hand, has nothing to fear, for with a compact central structure an open kingside is easy to defend. And what's more, this 'loosened' kingside formation will sooner or later become an advancing instrument of attack (a tank), particularly with the help of a knight to be placed at some point on f5 (cf. the game Nimzowitsch-Leonhardt, Game 14).

And now, having defined more or less precisely the logical connection between the concepts 'desert' and 'center,' it will be worthwhile to analyse the position mentioned at the beginning of Section 3.

After **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝c4 ♝c5 4.♞c3 ♞f6 5.d3 d6 6.♝g5 h6 7.♝h4 g5 8.♝g3** (see Diagram 253)

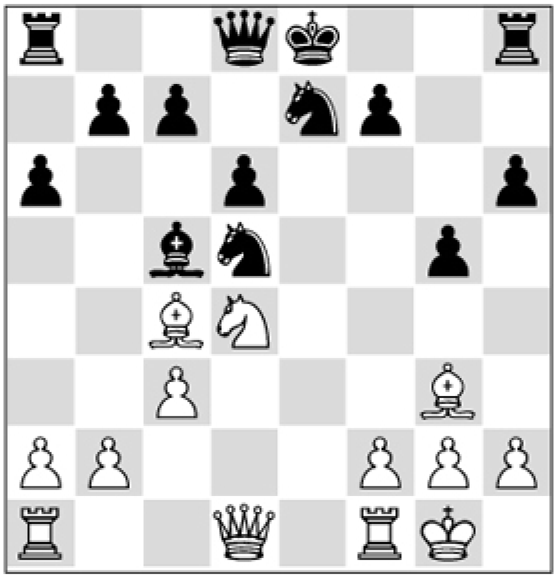
253



Putting the question and its consequences

it will be interesting to see whether the desert into which the bishop has been forced can be given new life through a central pawn advance. To this end it is necessary to examine carefully White’s chances of an attack in the center. It turns out that ♗b5 followed by d3-d4 represents one such possibility, and ♘d5 followed by c2-c3 and d3-d4 constitutes the other. (We may remark in passing that the position of the knight at d5, as a diagonal outpost on the diagonal of the bishop at c4, is entirely analogous to an outpost on a file.) After **8…a6**, to take away the first possibility, White could also play **9.♘d5**. For example, **9…♗e6 10.c3 ♗xd5 11.exd5 ♘e7 12.d4 exd4 13.♘xd4**. Black can pocket a pawn, but after **13…♘fxd5 14.0-0** (Diagram 254)

254

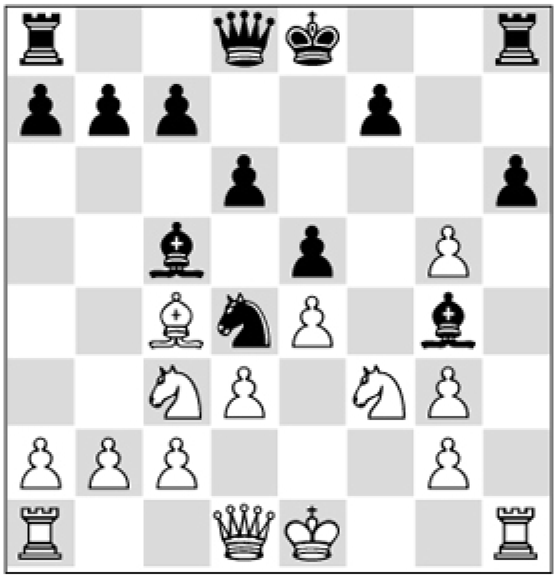


White stands better

White would have the better game, for the now revivified g3-bishop need no longer be held in restraint.

After **8.♗g3** (see Diagram 253), **8…♗g4** can also be played to contain to some extent White’s central aspirations. In one game the continuation was **9.h4 ♘h5** Possible was 9…♖g8 or 9…♔d7; the text move draws too many troops away from the center. **10.hxg5** Tempting as this move looks – for is not this capture the natural consequence of the pawn advance? – the move 10.♘d5 was nevertheless the correct play, the logic of which is this: 9.h4 has resulted in 9…♘h5, so that White now has a plus in the center that will be exploited by 10.♘d5. 10…♘d4 This transposition of moves loses, as White has a surprising combination up his sleeve (see Nimzowitsch-Fluss, Game 15). With **10…♘xg3 11.fxg3 ♘d4** (Diagram 255)

255



Black has a strong attack

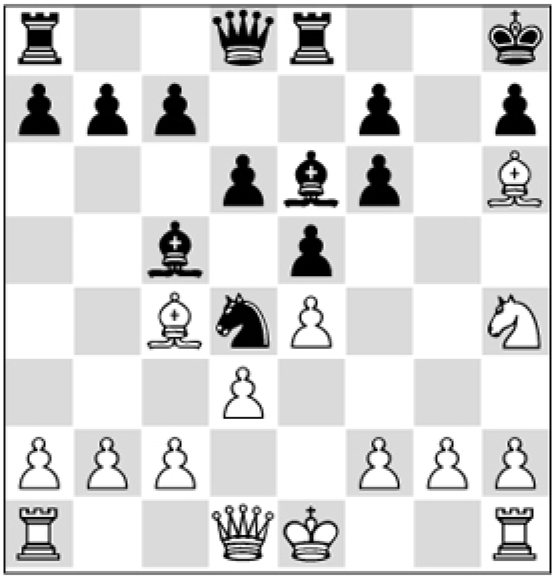
Black could initiate a very fine attack: **12.♜xh6 ♜xh6 13.gxh6 ♝xf3 14.gxf3 ♛g5** or **12.♞d5** (this attempt to exploit the center comes too late) **12…♝xf3 13.gxf3 ♛xg5 14.g4 c6 15.♜h5 cxd5!!** and wins, since the queen will carry all the white pieces along with her into the afterlife.

It is therefore of the utmost importance for the student to understand that the ‘question,’ which seemingly only affects the side of the board, is in fact fundamentally a problem concerning the center. Later, under Section (c), we shall demonstrate the validity of this correlation with another example.

(b) Ignoring the threat, or letting our position be ripped up

This method may be chosen if in return we can gain a greater freedom of action in the center, and by this we mean not merely a passive security, as we saw in (a) above. We must have a guarantee that we will get active play. For example, **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♝c4 ♝c5 5.d3 d6 6. ♝g5**. Now, ♘d5 threatens to become unpleasant. Nonetheless, we can ignore the threat, hence **6…0-0 7.♞d5 ♝e6**. Now the ‘tearing-open’ with **8.♞xf6+ gxf6 9.♝h6 ♜e8 10.♞h4 ♚h8**

256

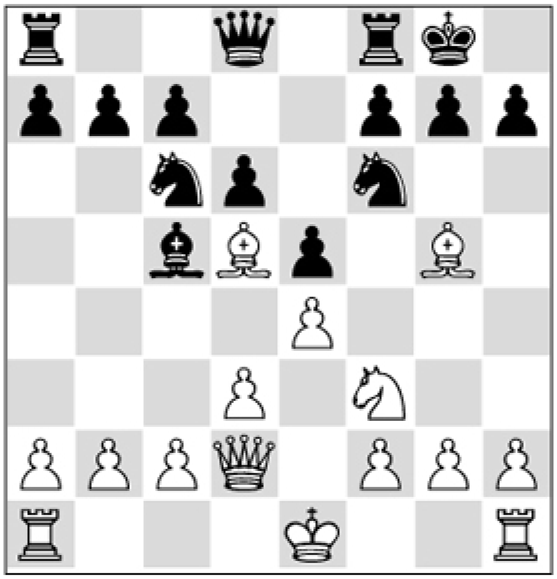


Chances for both sides

… results in a game with chances for both sides. But White can by no means claim to have the better position, for Black has the desired freedom of action in the center that we seek (the …d6-d5 advance), and there is in this world no more effective parry to an operation on the wing than a counter-thrust in the center. White has just let his troops undertake a diversion that has made them lose contact with the center. This diversion would have an inner justification only in a situation where it could lead to a long-lasting possession of the f5-square, which here seems doubtful. After 8.♗xf6 (instead of 8.♘xf6+) 8…gxf6 9.♘h4, too, the outcome would be uncertain.

Best for White after 6…0-0 (see Diagram 250) 7.♘d5 ♗e6 may be the continuation **8.♕d2**, maintaining the pressure. After the further moves **8…♗xd5 9.♗xd5** (Diagram 257), unpinning by putting the question would be unfeasible (9…h6 10.♗h4 g5? 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♘xg5).

257



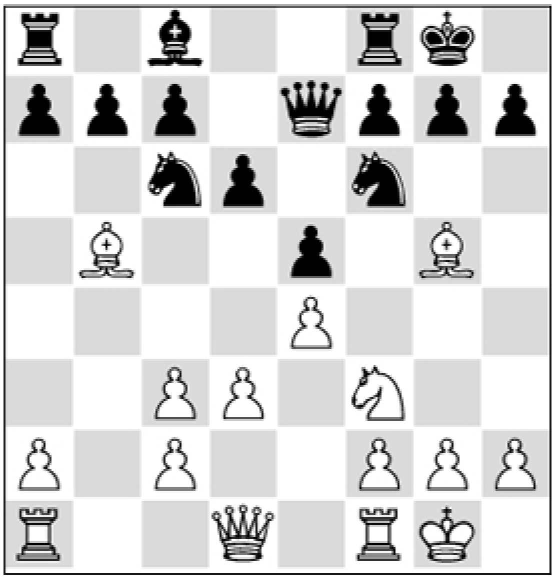
White stands a bit better.

(c) The reserves come running in order to achieve the unpinning in a peaceful way

For all those who like the quiet life, this is a most commendable procedure. We are familiar with it from, for example, the Metger Defense in the Four Knights Game and from a game with the Petroff Defense in Tarrasch’s match vs. Marshall.

The Metger Defense runs as follows: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♗g5**. Now Metger plays **7…♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♕e7** (Diagram 258),

258

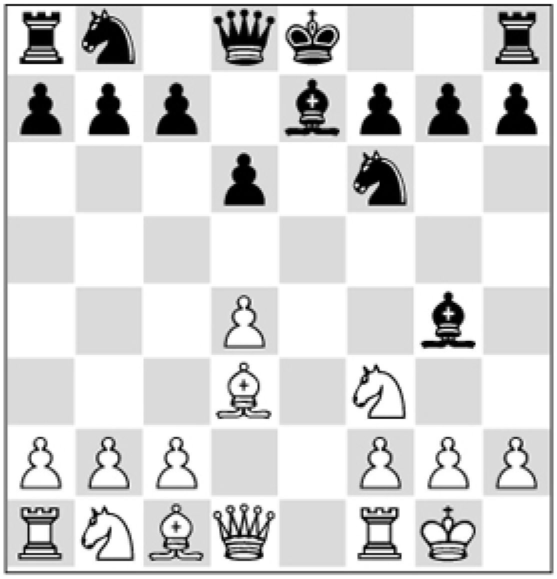


intending …♘c6-d8-e6, and if the bishop then goes to h4, the knight persists in the same style with …♘e6-f4-g6 and, if the bishop is at g5, …h7-h6. It is again evident that such a time-consuming maneuver is feasible only when the center is solid.

On 8…♕e7 the usual play is **9.♜e1 ♞d8 10.d4 ♞e6 11.♝c1 c5** or 11…c6 with about equal chances.

In the Petroff Defense, Tarrasch, after **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 ♝e7 6.♝d3 ♞f6 7.0-0 ♝g4** (Diagram 259), used to unpin with the quiet maneuver **8.♜e1** followed by ♘d2-f1-g3 and then h2-h3 (or h2-h3 first). He has won some fine games this way.

259



The logical framework that would appear to justify this time-consuming maneuver is based on the following two postulates:

(1) The unpinning has to be achieved as quickly as possible;

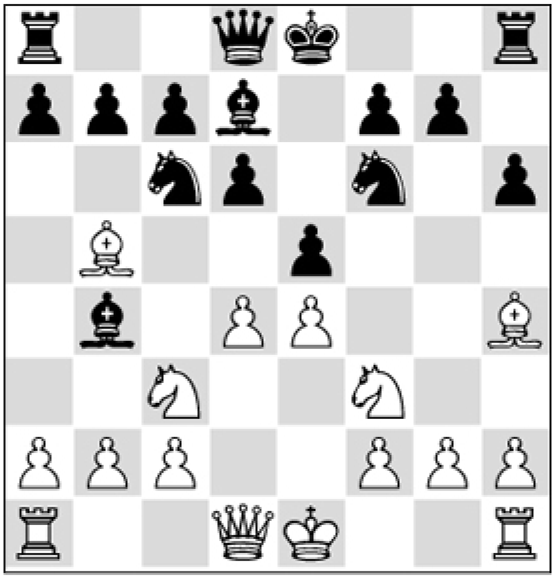
(2) To the support troops hurried up in this way there is offered, as a kind of reward for the help they provide, a favorable position with chances of approaching the enemy forces (say, with ♘g3-f5).

I should like to remark in addition that the moderns are inclined to endure the unpleasantness of a pin for a considerable time; we are no longer quite convinced that a pin should be shaken off at once. How we prefer to approach the matter can be seen in (d) below.

(d) Maneuvering and holding the choices (a), (b), and (c) in reserve

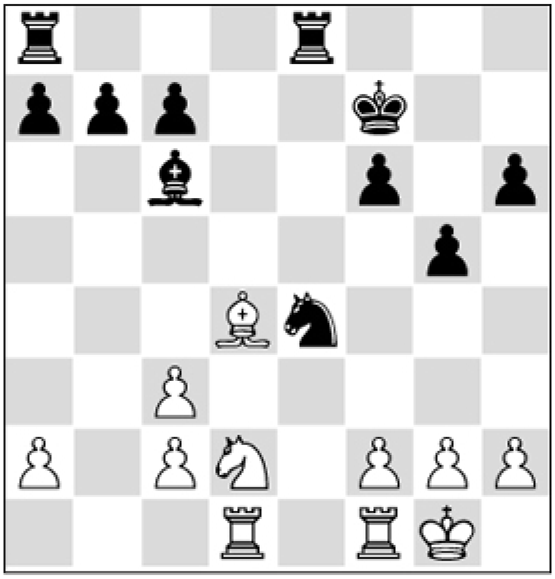
Such a strategy is of course very difficult, and makes great demands in terms of our technical skill. An example: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗c4 ♗c5 5.d3 d6 6.♗g5 ♗e6**, as played by Capablanca. **7.♗b5 h6 8.♗h4 ♗b4! 9.d4 ♗d7!** (Diagram 260)

260



As a result of the advance d3-d4 provoked by Capablanca, the e4-pawn is now in need of protection. **10.0-0 ♝xc3 11.bxc3** Here, 11.♗xf6 could have been played first. **11…g5 12.♝g3 ♞xe4** Black had postponed the unpinning until a suitable moment arrived. **13.♝xc6 ♝xc6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♝xe5** 15.♘xe5 might have been better. **15…♛xd1 16.♜axd1 f6 17.♝d4 ♚f7 18.♞d2 ♜he8** (Diagram 261),

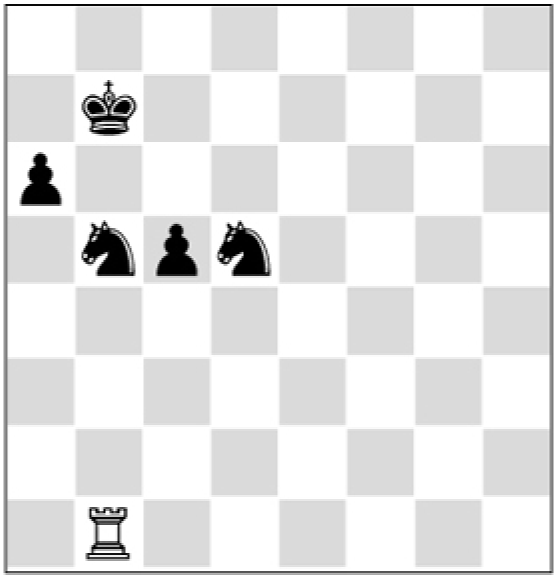
261



with a favorable endgame for Black. His opponent, the author of this book, had to strike his weapons at the 64th move.

In an advanced stage of the game, particularly at tactical moments, the process of unpinning shows quite another face. See Diagram 262.

262



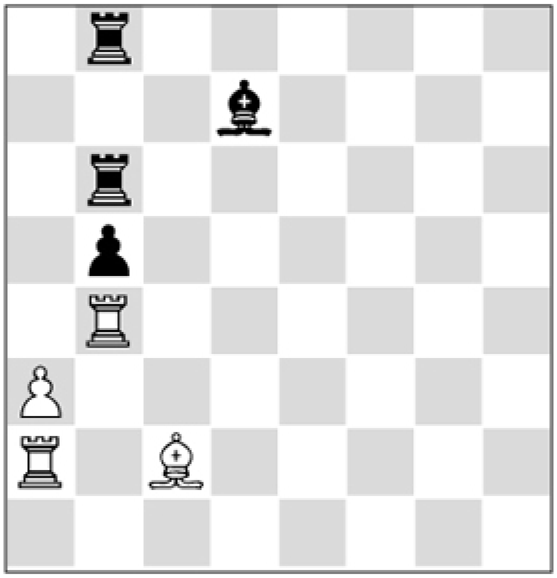
Unpinning by occupying one of the points in the ‘corridor’ b1-b5 or b5-b7. Hence 1…♘b4 or 1…♘b6

Here Black plays …♘b6 or …♘b4.

The space between the pinning piece and the pinned piece on the one hand, and between the pinned piece and the screened piece standing behind it, we call the ‘corridor’. By posting a protected piece in the corridor, the pin can be lifted. Another possibility lies in the flight of the screened piece; for example, in Diagram 262, …♔c6 or …♔c7, etc., puts and end to the pin.

If the screened piece is not too valuable, a similar service can be rendered by giving it adequate protection. But in this latter case we must take care to preserve the contact between the pinned piece, the screened piece to the rear, and the piece that is protecting this screened piece. See Diagram 263.

263



White unites his troops

With ♖ab2 and ♗d3 White puts the threat a3-a4 into effect; how can Black anticipate this build-up? By transferring his rook from b6 to b7 and securing it with …♗c6. Then he can calmly await a3-a4.
Note, too, how the unpinning is carried out in Diagram 264.

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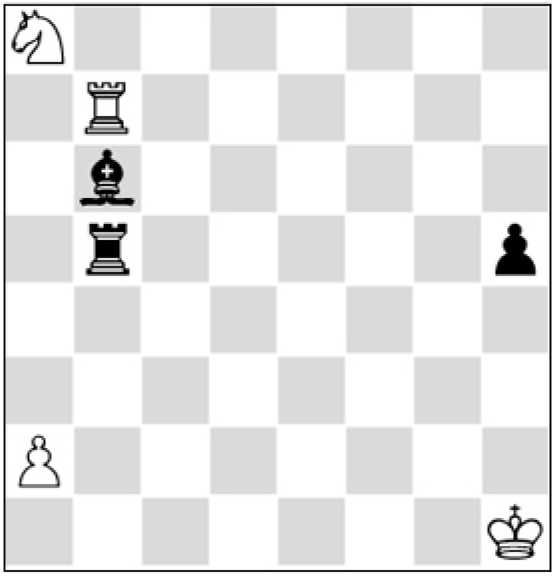


Black unpins

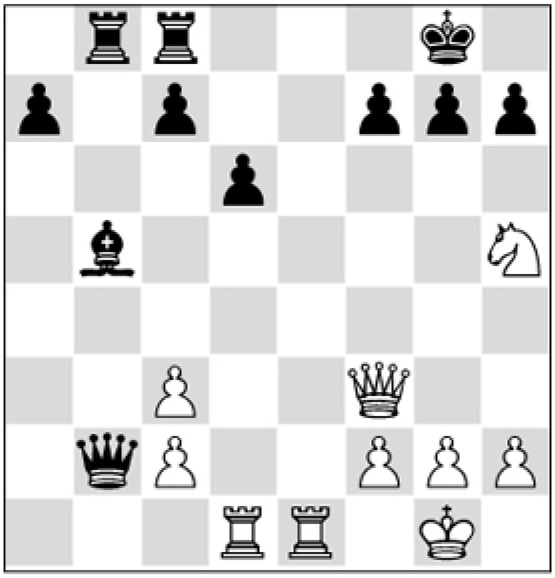
1…♜b1+ 2.♚g2 ♜b2+ and …♗d4. Here, contact is established between the bishop and rook; otherwise the bishop would have been lost.

With this, we conclude the chapter on ‘Pinning’. We will now only add several examples from practice, and a schema.

Games on the theme of pinning

See Diagram 265.

265



Position from the game Nimzowitsch-Vidmar, Karlsbad 1911

In the game, White played 22.♖b1, which Black met with 22…♖e8. As I later showed, **22.♜e4** would have won. The main variation runs: **22…♝c6 23.♞f6+ gxf6** If 23…♔h8, then 24.♖h4 ♕xc2 25.♘xh7!. Now we come to a direct pursuit of Black’s king, who has to flee. But this flight is anything but untroubled; instead, various rather unpleasant pins will be conjured up against him. As we emphasized in the first section of this chapter, the pin is characteristic of a pursuit. After **22.♜e4 ♝c6 23.♞f6+ gxf6** there now follows **24.♜g4+ ♚f8 25.♛xf6 ♝d7! 26.♜g7 ♝e6 27.♜xh7 ♚e8**, and now comes pin No. 1, namely, **28.♜e1**, threatening ♕xf7+. To avoid this, Black is forced into 28…♔d7, by which the f7-pawn becomes pinned. Then, 29.♕xe6+ wins easily.

For the sake of practice, let us dwell for a moment on the position after 25.♕xf6 ♗d7. Here, 26.♖f4 would also win, for 26…♗e6 is unplayable due to 27.♕xe6, 26…♗e8 fails to 27.♖e1, and on 26…♔g8 there follows 27.♕xf7+ ♔h8 28.♕f6+ ♔g8 29.♖f3.

The following three games show the connection between the pin and the center.

Game 14

Aron Nimzowitsch
Paul Leonhardt
San Sebastian 1911
Four Knights Game

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.d3

White now has a solid position, since the enemy queen file bites on granite (the protected d3-pawn). But this solidity is also evident in the fact that White’s e-pawn can never be bothered by the advance …d6-d5. In other words, the center cannot be opened.

7…♗g4

The pin.

8.h3 ♗h5 9.♗g5

9.g4 would be premature because of 9…♘xg4 10.hxg4 ♗xg4 followed by …f7-f5.

9…♕d6 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.g4

Putting the question is indicated here, for the bishop will be driven into a desert that, because …d6-d5 is unavailable, cannot be transformed into a ‘flowering garden’ (see the section on unpinning under (a)). Notice how the h3- and g4-pawns slowly mature into storm troops.

11…♗g6 12.♔g2 ♖ad8 13.♕e2 ♗xc3

Otherwise there follows ♘d1-e3-f5.

14.bxc3 c5 15.♘d2

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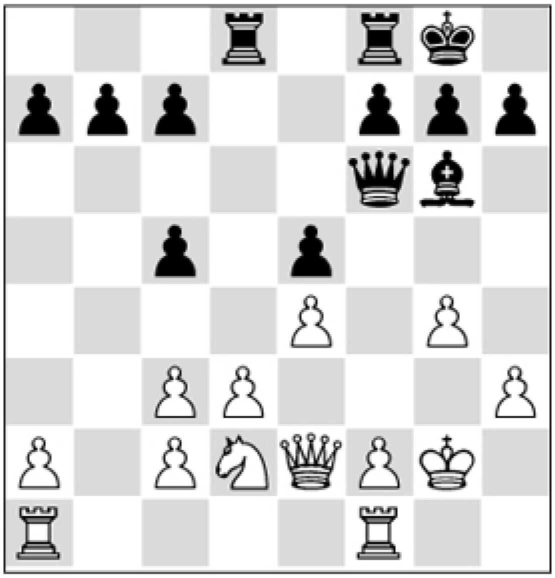

White intends the maneuver ♘d2-c4-e3-f5; but he is also looking to prevent the embarrassing …c5-c4 for as long as possible without the help of c3-c4, for this move would leave the outpost point on the d-file (d4) unprotected.

15…♕e7 16.♘c4 b6 17.♘e3 f6

In order eventually to free his bishop. But this move permits White an opportune g4-g5.

18.♖g1 ♕d7 19.♔h2 ♔h8 20.♖g3 ♕b5 21.♕e1 ♕a4 22.♕c1 ♖d7 23.h4 ♝f7 24.c4

The player of the black pieces has succeeded in provoking c3-c4. In the meantime, White has attentively arranged the kingside to his liking.

24…♝e6 25.♕b2 a5 26.♖ag1 ♕c6 27.♖1g2!!

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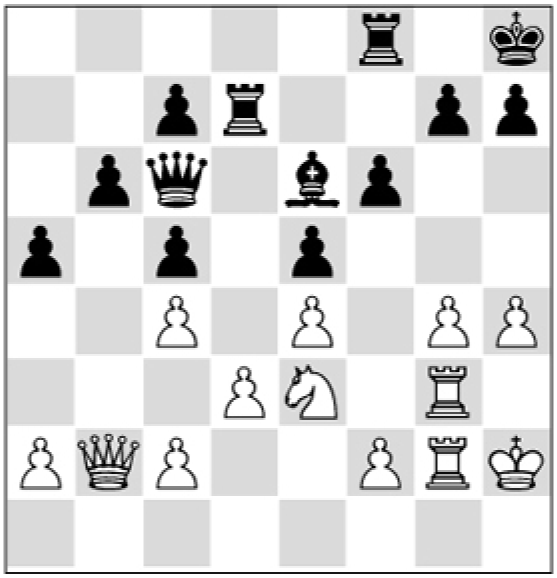

White quietly makes his final preparations for a worthy reception of the enemy queen at d4. Note how the first player has managed to combine defense of the center with his attacking plans on the right side.

27…♕d6 28.♕c1 ♕d4?

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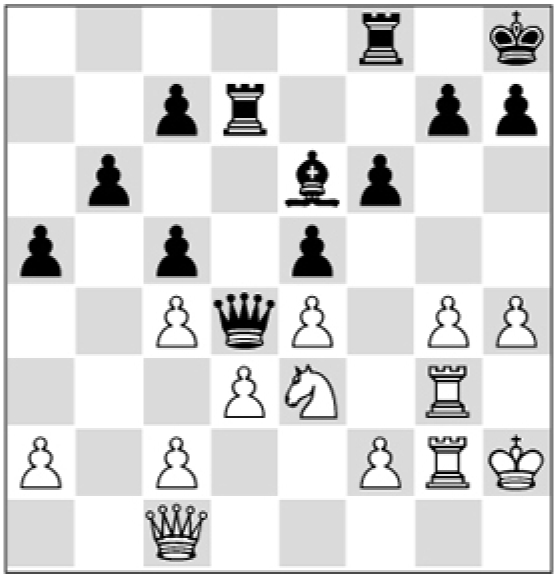

29.♘d5!

Winning the queen. This ‘trap’ was acclaimed on all sides. The fact that it was subordinate to the strategic goals I had set earlier in the game was taken into consideration by no one. My strategic objective, however, was to prevent a breakthrough in the center, or any maneuvering there, and to make possible the ultimate advance g4-g5, with an attack.

29…♜xd5 30.c3! ♛xd3 31.exd5

31.cxd5 was more precise.

31…♛xc4 32.dxe6 ♛xe6 33.♛c2 c4 34.♛f5 ♛xf5 35.gxf5

And White won. The student may see from the laborious and protracted defense that White adopted (moves 21, 22, 25, and 28) that he was fully aware of the fact that the arrangement of his kingside pawns (at h3 and g4) absolutely required a closed center.

The following game elucidates the problem of ‘putting the question’ in an instructive manner.

Game 15

Aron Nimzowitsch
Georg Fluss
Correspondence game, 1913
Giuoco Piano

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞c3 ♞c6 4.♝c4 ♝c5 5.d3 d6 6.♝g5 h6 7.♝h4

Of course, 7.♗e3 is also playable.

7…g5

Here, 7…♗e6 may be better.

8.♝g3 ♝g4 9.h4 ♞h5 10.hxg5

As already remarked, White should have given closer attention to the problem of the center. For instance, 10.♘d5! ♘d4 11.c3, with the better game for White.

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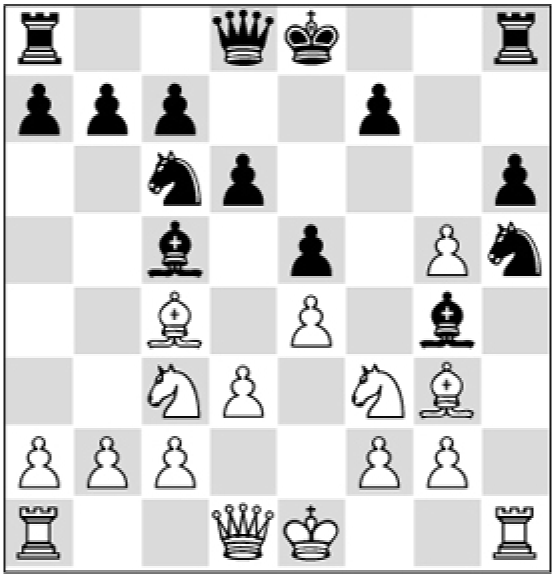

10…♘d4

And here, Black, with 10…♘xg3 11.fxg3 ♘d4, could have gained an advantage in the center. As already shown, 12.♘d5 would have been inadequate, since Black would have had at his disposal a queen sacrifice after 10…♘xg3 11.fxg3 ♘d4 12.♘d5? (too late!) ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♕xg5 14.g4 c6 15.♖h5: 15…cxd5!. Inadequate for White too after 10…♘xg3 11.fxg3 ♘d4 would be the sacrificial continuation 12.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 13.♘xe5+ dxe5 14.♕xg4, for 14…♕xg5 15.♕d7+ ♔g6 would have given Black a safe enough position. Hence, the flank attack 10.hxg5 instead of the indicated central thrust 10.♘d5 may have been a decisive mistake, one that Black could have exploited with 10…♘xg3 and 11…♘d4.

11.♗xe5!

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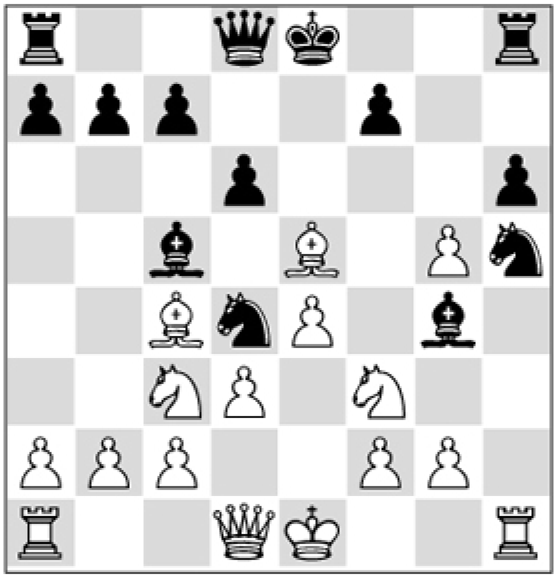

A stunning subterfuge; White gives up his bishop but leaves Black with a knight on h5 hanging in the air and his king in exactly the same state.

11…♝xf3

If Black accepts with 11…dxe5, then 12.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 13.♘xe5+ ♔g8 14.♕xg4 and wins.

12.gxf3 dxe5 13.♜xh5 ♜g8!

White’s position would now appear to be an unenviable one, for the d4-knight exerts pressure and the g-pawn would appear to be lost.

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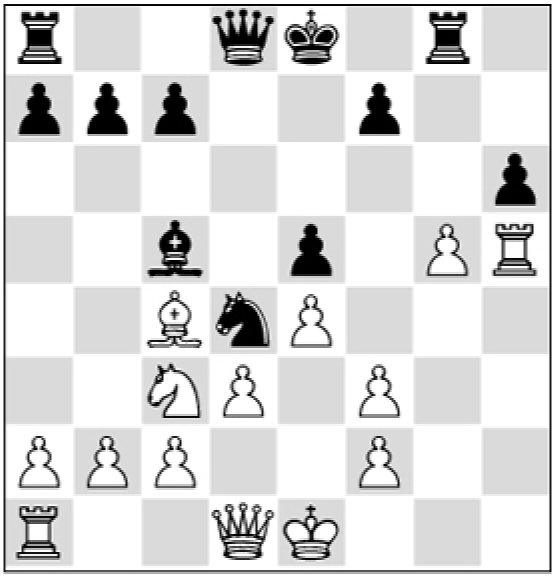

14.f4

The saving move.

14…exf4 15.♛g4

The point. White is not afraid of Black’s attack with 15…♘xc2+, which is a mere flash in the pan.

15…♞xc2+

Otherwise, 16.0-0-0 follows. On 15…♖xg5, 16.♕xf4 would be the reply.

16.♚d2 ♞xa1 17.♝xf7+!

Black resigned. If 17…♔xf7, then 18.♕f5+ ♔e8 19.♕e6+ ♔f8 20.g6 and wins, or 19…♕e7 20.♕xg8+ ♕f8 21.♕h7! ♕e7 22.g6! ♕xh7 23.gxh7 ♗d4 24.♘b5, or 22…♗d4 23.♘b5 ♕b4+ 24.♔d1 and wins.

Game 16 offers a whole assortment of pins. We see a richly colored array of poisonous and harmless ones in turn.

Game 16

Akiba Rubinstein
Aron Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925
Queen’s Pawn Game

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♝g2 ♝b7 5.dxc5 bxc5 6.c4

The maneuver chosen by White is by no means to be criticized. He gets the d-file and the outpost point at d5 that belongs to it, while Black’s preponderance in the center (the c-, d-, and e-pawns against the c- and e-pawns) evinces only a very slight degree of mobility. Observe that we are already starting to present the reader with themes that are entirely positional: mobility as a criterion of the value of a pawn as such in fact forms the axis around which all positional play revolves. Many critics, in contrast, have judged the maneuver in question unfavorably – quite unjustifiably, for the theory of the tempo (‘the d-pawn makes two moves and then disappears,’ as said with a frown by a prominent master) is hardly conclusive in the context of a closed game.

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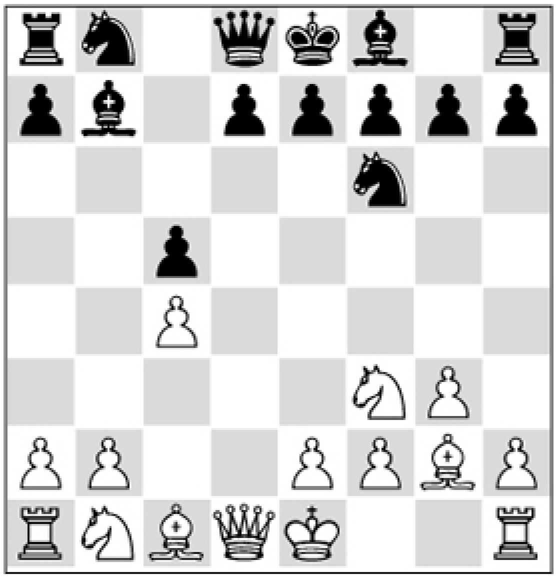

6…g6 7.b3 ♗g7 8.♗b2 0-0 9.0-0

Both sides castle in good conscience, for not even the most hypermodern pair of masters can produce more than four ‘skewed’ bishops!

9…♘c6

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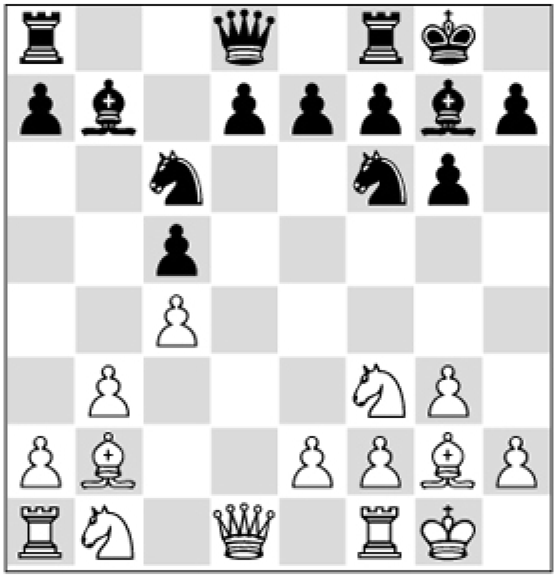

A normal move that however has a deeper meaning. One rather expected …d7-d6 and …♘d7, to continue with …a7-a5 followed by …♘b6 and …a5-a4. But as sound as it may be to want to divest oneself of the isolated a-pawn, it is nevertheless not recommendable to emphasize such a motivation too eagerly in the present instance.

Herein lies what in my opinion is the main failing of the old-classical (I mean the pseudo-classical) strategy: the fact that its representatives, with great rancor, endeavored to push through some sort of advance or another without taking into consideration (1) that there is a thing that we call an ability to transform advantages, by which we renounce a certain advantage for the sake of another, and (2) that one's opponent will surrender many points on his own accord without being compelled to.

In the case before us White will of course play ♘c3, opposing the …a5-a4 advance. Yet, will this knight stay on that square forever? No, he will in fact head for d5. Hence the possibility …a5-a4 must at some point fall into our lap like a ripe fruit.

Apart from that, the knight stands much better on c6 than on b6, for White is clearly planning a build-up with ♘c3, ♕c2, and e2-e4. Black accordingly is reckoning on the counter-build-up …♘c6, …d7-d6, …e7-e5, and …♘d4!, the knight coming to the rescue of the d6-pawn behind it.

10.♘c3 a5 11.♕d2 d6 12.♘e1

The beginning of a difficult and costly journey – ♘e1-c2-e3-d5. More natural seems 12.♘d5; e.g., 12…♘xd5 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.cxd5.

12…♕d7 13.♘c2 ♘b4 14.♘e3 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2

Recapturing with the knight would mean a straying from the journey's destination (d5).

15…♕b7+ 16.f3

If 16.♔g1, then 16…♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♕xe4, and …a5-a4 becomes a real possibility.

16…♗h6

A pin of a harmless kind, since clearly this last move means a dubious weakening of his own (Black's) kingside.

17.♘cd1

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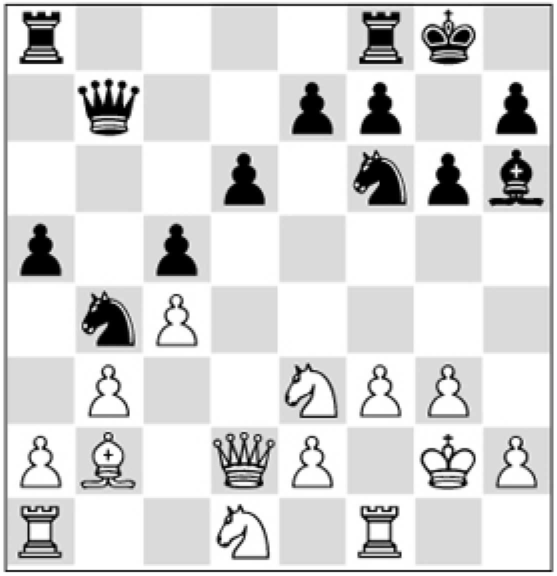

Now White threatens 18.♗xf6 exf6 19.♕xd6.

17…a4!

See the note to 9…♘c6.

18.bxa4 ♜fe8!!

This purely defensive move (against the aforementioned threat ♗xf6, etc.) is all the more surprising, inasmuch as after the ‘energetic’ thrust at move 17, which had been fervently desired for so long, one would have expected anything but a defensive move. This blending of attack and defense gives the combination a thoroughly original stamp.

19.♗xf6

So it seems Rubinstein does not believe in the solidity of the defense Black has chosen; he will soon learn better.

19…exf6 20.♚f2

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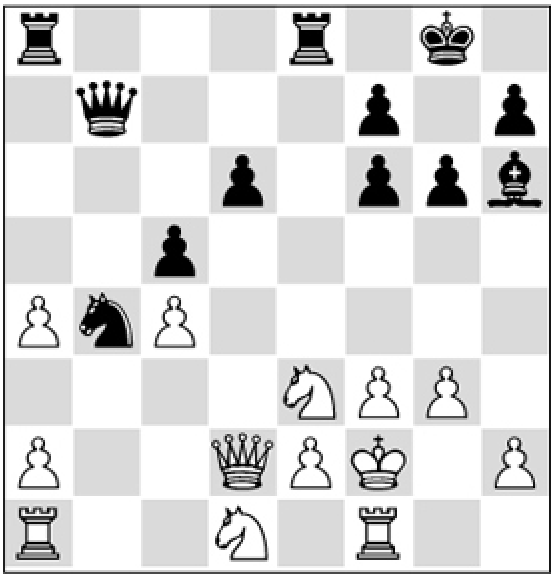

Now White threatens to unpin with f3-f4, after which he would be in a position to occupy d5 once and for all.

20…f5!!

Now Black’s plan is revealed: White is defenseless against the double-threat 21…f4 22.gxf4 ♗xf4, with a long-term pin, and 21…♗g7 followed by …♗d4, with a pin just as enduring.

21.♛xd6 ♝g7 22.♜b1 ♝d4

Threatening 23…♘d3+.

23.♚g2

The poor knights! At the 17th move they had to break off their journeys, and now both even have to die without getting closer to their destination, d5. On 23.♖b3, Black, by means of 23…♖e6 24.♕f4 ♕e7 (threatening …♘c2) 25.♔g2 ♖e8, would have continued his assault on the pinned knight at e3 most forcefully.

23…♝xe3 24.♞xe3 ♜xe3 25.♛xc5

Now it is White’s turn to pin.

25…♜xe2+ 26.♜f2 ♜xf2+ 27.♛xf2

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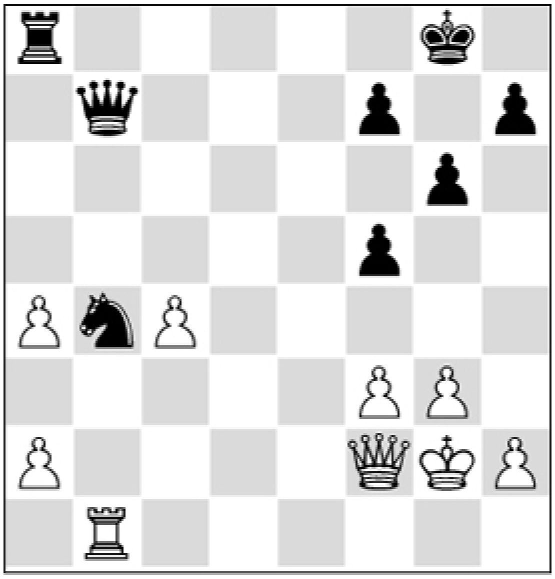


Forced, for 27.♔xf2 ♘d3+ and …♘xc5, with b7 protected, would lose at once.

27…♜xa4!

The ‘immediately unpinning’ 27…♕e7 is avoided, for White can derive no advantage from the pin in any case.

28.a3

If 28.♕b2, then 28…♕c8!, for this is the only suitable retreat for the ‘screened’ piece. Bad, on the other hand (after 28.♕b2), would be the move 28…♕c7 because of 29.♖e1, and 28…♕c6? because of 29.♖d1. That 28…♖xa2?? is a gross blunder (on account of 29.♕xa2 ♘xa2 30.♖xb7) should be evident.

28…♜xa3 29.♛e2 ♜a8

Now he returns home, sated and in a joyful mood.

30.c5 ♛a6

The unpinning.

31.♛xa6 ♞xa6 32.♜a1

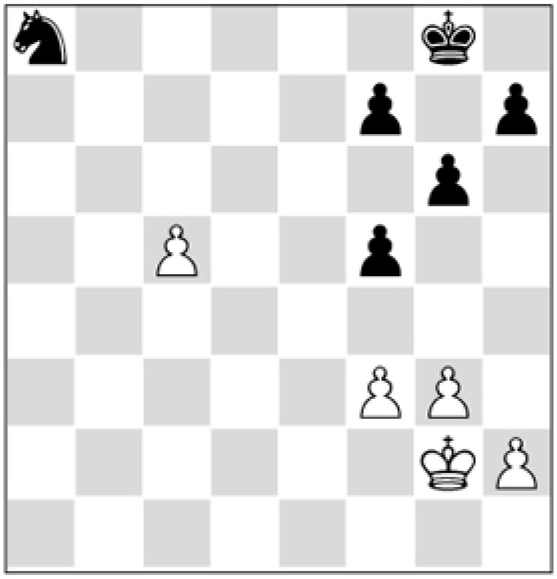
A final pin.

32…♞c7

A final unpinning.

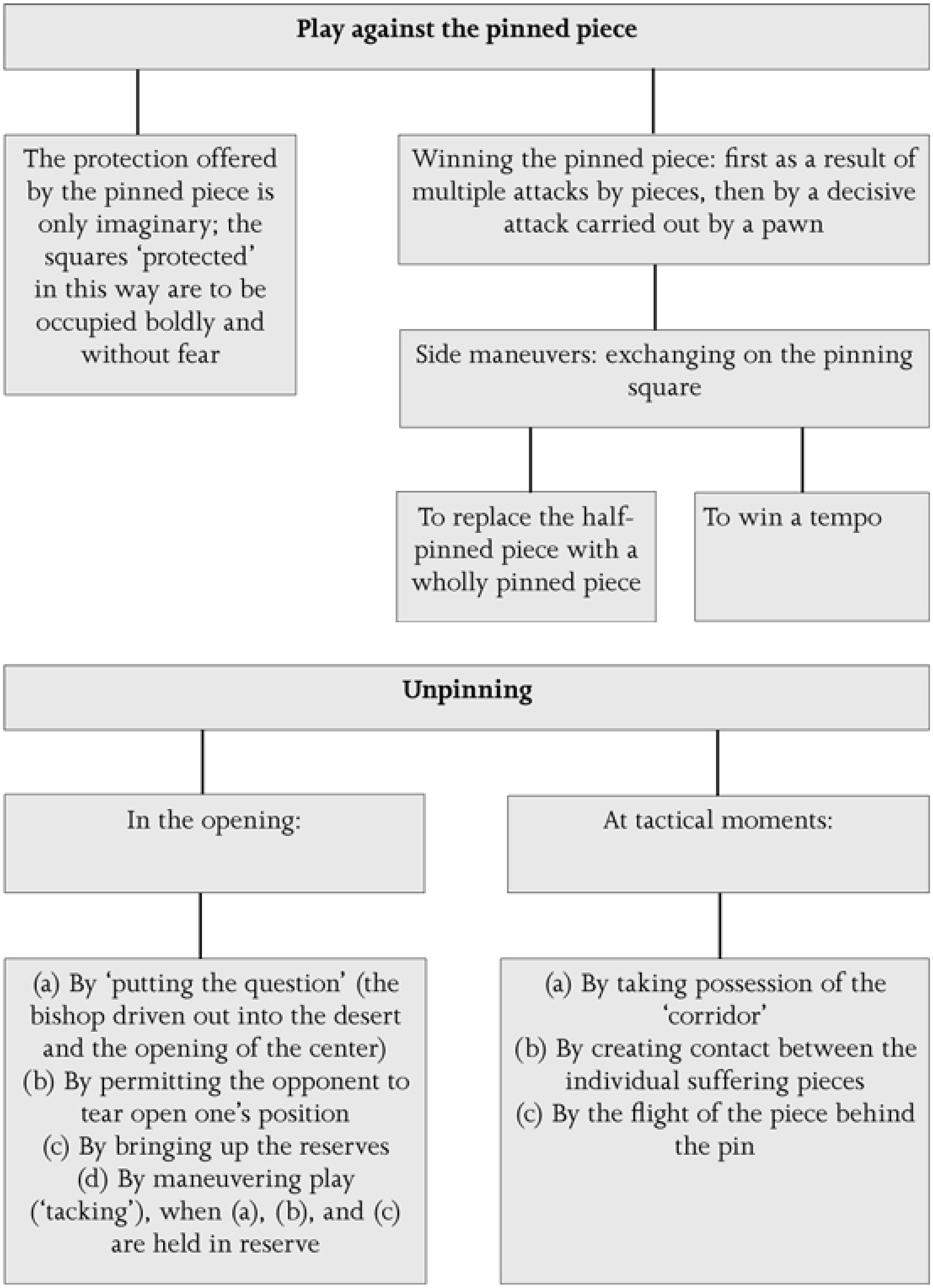
33.♜xa8+ ♞xa8

277



and White gave up on the 38th move.

Little schema for the pin



Play against the pinned piece

The protection offered by the pinned piece is only imaginary; the squares 'protected' in this way are to be occupied boldly and without fear

Winning the pinned piece: first as a result of multiple attacks by pieces, then by a decisive attack carried out by a pawn

Side maneuvers: exchanging on the pinning square

To replace the half-pinned piece with a wholly pinned piece

To win a tempo

Unpinning

In the opening:

(a) By 'putting the question' (the bishop driven out into the desert and the opening of the center)
(b) By permitting the opponent to tear open one's position
(c) By bringing up the reserves
(d) By maneuvering play ('tacking'), when (a), (b), and (c) are held in reserve

At tactical moments:

(a) By taking possession of the 'corridor'
(b) By creating contact between the individual suffering pieces
(c) By the flight of the piece behind the pin

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Chapter 8

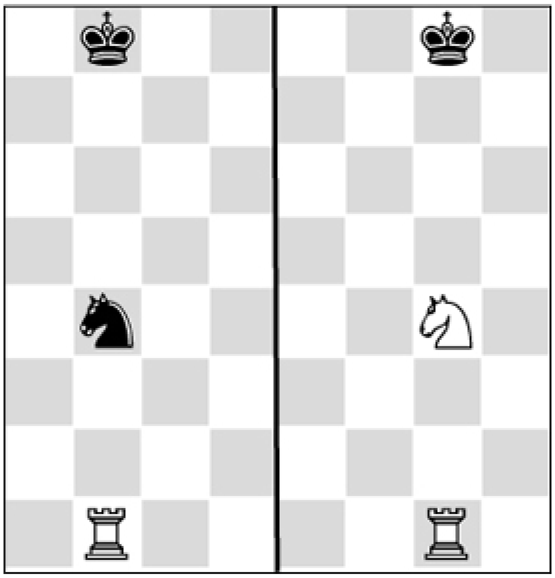
The Discovered Check

A short chapter, but rich in dramatic complications

1. The degree of relationship between the pin and the discovered check is more closely defined. Where should the piece that gives the discovered check move to?

Diagram 278 gives a clear picture of the degree of relationship between pinning and the discovered check.

278



In the discovered check on the right, the rook is the ‘threatening’ piece, the knight is the ‘intermediate’ or ‘withdrawing’ piece, the king is the ‘threatened’ piece

The diagram shows that the pinned piece, ever weary of such eternal persecution, has changed its color. This change has had the effect of transforming the feeble youth into a powerful warrior. Hence we say: the discovered check is a pin in which the pinned piece has gone into the enemy camp with colors flying. Here too, then, just as in the case of pinning, we are dealing with three actors:

(1) the piece threatening a check, which for now is masked by his own piece;

(2) the ‘exposing’ piece;

(3) the piece standing behind the exposing piece.

Or, more briefly: (1) the threatening piece, (2) the intermediate piece, and (3) the threatened piece.

But whereas in the case of the pin the limited mobility of the pinned (intermediate) piece is the source of all his evils, in the discovered check, conversely, the intermediate piece in the discovered check is imbued with a really uncanny mobility: any square this piece desires is permitted to him; indeed, he can even occupy with confidence a point that is threatened multiple times by the enemy, for his opponent, being in check, cannot capture!

Hence, the intermediate piece is like a ‘little’ man who is permitted everything, in having become the protégé of a powerful man.

If we now examine a bit more closely the possible moves – ‘withdrawing moves’ – of the small man, we find that the ‘withdrawing’ piece can accomplish three things:

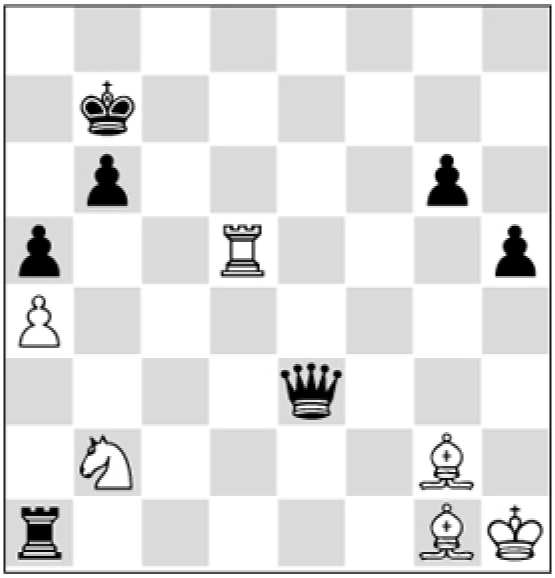
(a) He can take anything that isn’t nailed down, since his opponent cannot recapture.

(b) He can attack any of his opponent’s major pieces without being disturbed in the slightest by the thought that the square on which he so impudently lands belongs by rights to the enemy, that is to say, a square that is under repeated attack.

(c) He can trade the square he is on for another that for any reason strikes him as more advantageous than his original square.

Consider now Diagram 279.

279



Here, (a), above, could be carried out by ♖xh5+ or ♖xa5+. Note the fearlessness of the withdrawing piece. He could execute (b) with ♖e5+ or ♖d3+, and course (c) if he reproaches himself for the fact that his bishop is pinned, restraining its otherwise healthy appetite; he will play 1.♖d1+ and 2.♗xe3.

It may be unnecessary to give encouragement to the student, for he knows already from the previous chapter that it pays well to show courage in those situations where the danger is – only in his imagination.

Accordingly, all squares, even those under very heavy fire by the opponent, are at the disposal of the withdrawing piece.

The group of possibilities under (c) have of course a wider range than the example shown here (Diagram 279) would give us to think. But to elaborate on further examples would be to no purpose, for the reasons why a piece is more effective ‘here’ rather than ‘there’ are manifold. We refer, however, to a further example in the next section.

2. The ‘Zwickmühle’ (‘mill’): the long-striding withdrawing piece can move to any square along its line of motion without spending a tempo, hence wholly gratis

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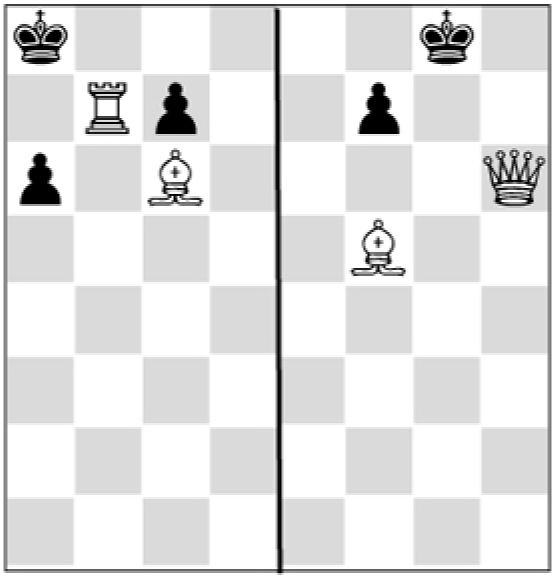
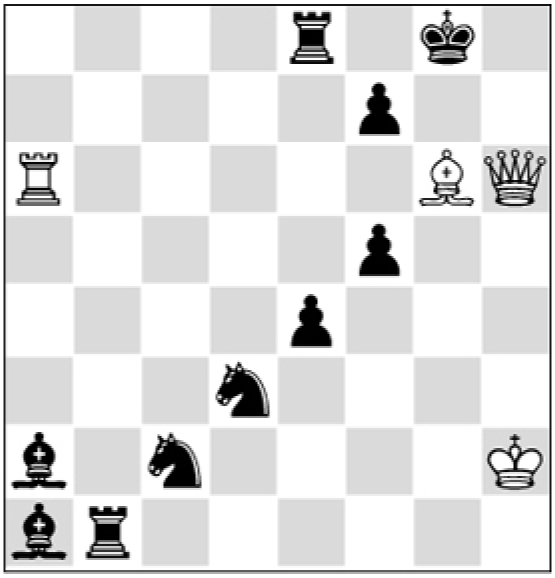


Two ‘Zwickmühles’. On the right it operates as follows: 1.♗h7+ ♔h8 2.♗e4+ ♔g8 and White has reached the diagrammed position with a new placement for the bishop and still is on the move

On the right side of Diagram 280, White plays 1.♗h7+, when 1…♔h8 is the only move, and now the terrible weapon in a possible discovered check becomes apparent. If White plays 2.♗b1+, Black escapes the discovered check with 2…♔g8; but 3.♗h7+ draws him back in, as the otherwise stalemated king has only one move available, and this only because the intermediate piece has blocked the effect of the ‘threatening’ piece. Hence, 1.♗h7+ blocks the attacking effect along h6-h8 and thus creates a flight square. It is just this stalemate situation we describe that gives rise to a ‘Zwickmühle’ (‘mill’), whose powerful effect lies in the fact that the intermediate piece can occupy any square on the line of its withdrawal (here, the diagonal h7-b1) and without costing White a tempo – for White again has the move.

The Zwickmühle can cause terrible devastation. See Diagram 281.

281

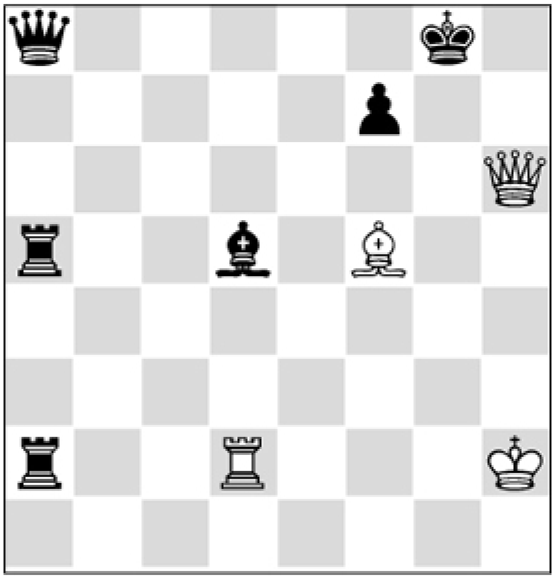


A Zwickmühle, blood-letting, a conciliatory sacrifice, and a mating conclusion

Play proceeded **1.♗h7+ ♔h8 2.♗xf5+ ♔g8 3.♗h7+ ♔h8 4.♗xe4+ ♔g8 5.♗h7+ ♔h8 6.♗xd3+ ♔g8 7.♗h7+ ♔h8 8.♗xc2+ ♔g8 9.♗h7+ ♔h8 10.♗xb1+ ♔g8**, and now White gives back some of his superfluous material, somewhat like a usurer who has grown rich off his trade and who in his later years, at little cost to himself, turns benefactor: **11.♖g6+! fxg6 12.♗xa2+** and mate next move. The bishop has eaten his way to b1 in order, after a preliminary rook sacrifice, to take over the diagonal a2-g8.

A similar, more subtle picture is shown in Diagram 282:

282

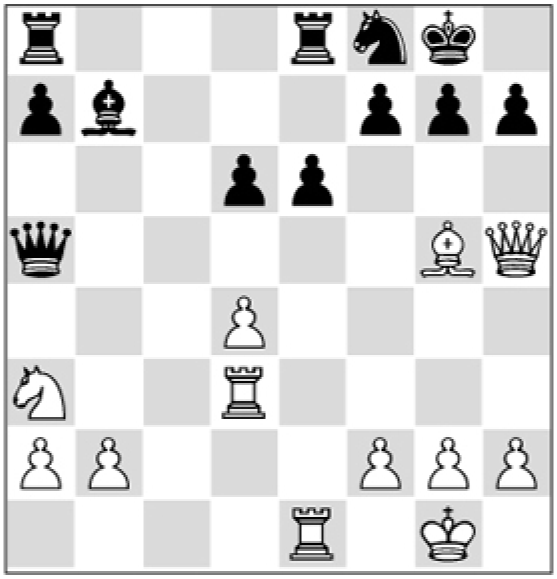


White wins

Here the task is to lure the bishop from the protection of the f7-square. This can be achieved by **1.♗h7+ ♚h8 2.♗c2+!** The better place for the bishop in accordance with (c), above. **2…♚g8 3.♖g2+! ♗xg2** And now, again, **4.♗h7+ ♚h8 5.♗g6+ ♚g8 6.♕h7+ ♚f8 7.♕xf7#**. I composed both the above positions specially for this book.

We must also list under this category the Zwickmühle found in Torre vs. Lasker, which, despite its elegance, I present here only with some reluctance, so imposing is Lasker’s truly greater mind. But even great thinkers are sometimes vulnerable, as the following game would seem to demonstrate.
See Diagram 283.

283



Torre-Lasker, Moscow 1925

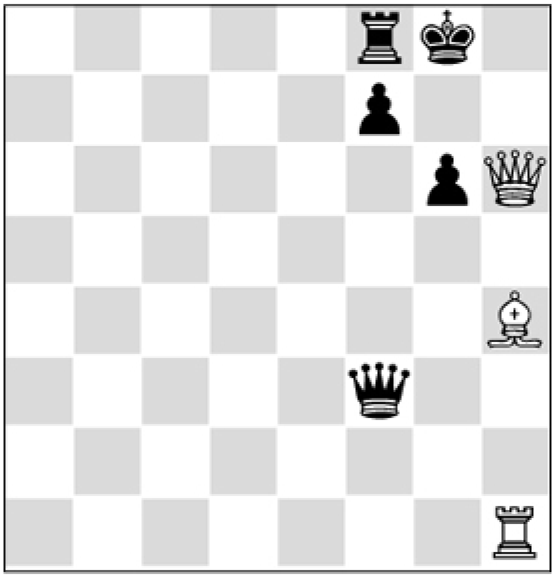
In this position, with its dangers for White (the rook on e1 is directly threatened, the bishop on g5 indirectly), Torre came up with **21.b4! ♛f5** (not 21…♕xb4 because of 22.♖b1; better than the text, however, was 21…♕d5) **22.♜g3 h6 23.♞c4** This intervention by the knight would have been impossible with the queen on d5. **23…♛d5 24.♞e3** Torre fights like a lion to break the pin, but without a point for the bishop to withdraw to this would not have been possible. **24…♛b5 25.♝f6!** So that this withdrawal should be effective, the black queen had to be lured away to an unprotected square – therefore 24.♘e3!. **25…♛xh5 26.♜xg7+ ♚h8** A Zwickmühle has been put into effect. **27.♜xf7+ ♚g8 28.♜g7+ ♚h8 29.♜xb7+ ♚g8 30.♜g7+ ♚h8 31.♜g5+ ♚h7 32.♜xh5 ♚g6 33.♜h3 ♚xf6 34.♜xh6+** and White won.

3. The double-check: often appears like a sudden violent storm. Brought about by the withdrawing piece also delivering check. The impact of the double-check expresses itself in the fact that of the three possible counters to the double-check two are invalid, namely, the capture of the

checking piece and the interposition of a piece. The one and only resource is to flee.

See Diagram 284.

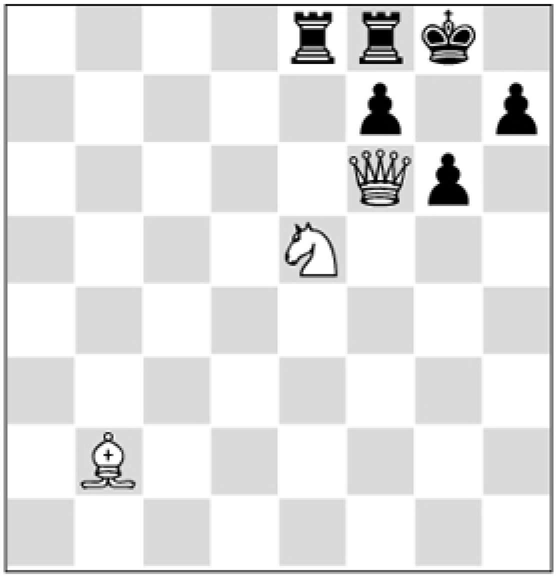
284



Double-check

Here we have to choose between 1.♕h7+ and 1.♕h8+. The first yields only a simple discovered check (1.♕h7+? ♔xh7 2.♗f6+) and so permits the counter 2…♕xh1 or 2…♕h5. The second move, however, leads to a double-check, which automatically excludes the responses mentioned. Therefore, **1.♛h8+ ♚xh8 2.♝f6++ ♚g8 3.♞h6#**.
Also well known to us is the position in Diagram 285.

285



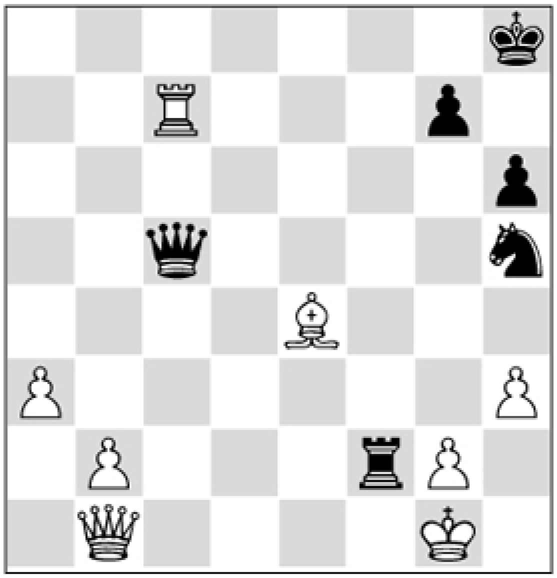
It is mate in three moves with **1.♕h8+!! ♚xh8 2.♘xf7++ ♚g8 3.♘h6#**.

The double-check is a weapon of a purely tactical nature. It has a terrible ‘driving’ effect: even the most sluggish king takes to most frantic flight when subject to a double-check.

We conclude this chapter with three little examples that comport with our theme.

1. In a game played some years ago between Von Bardeleben and a student, Nisniewitsch, the players arrived at the following, amusing position:

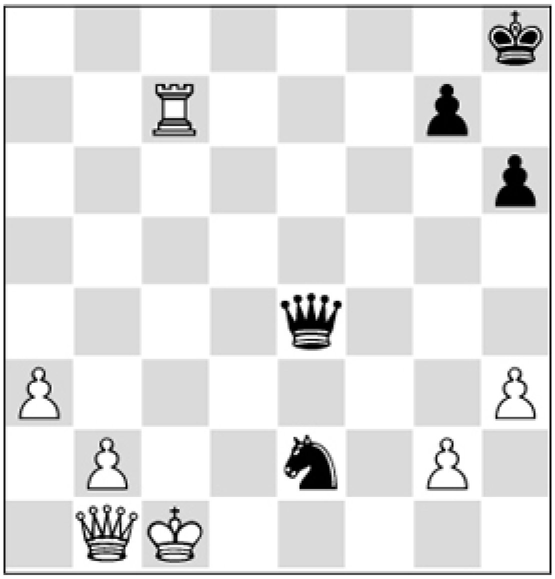
286



Von Bardeleben-Nisniewitsch

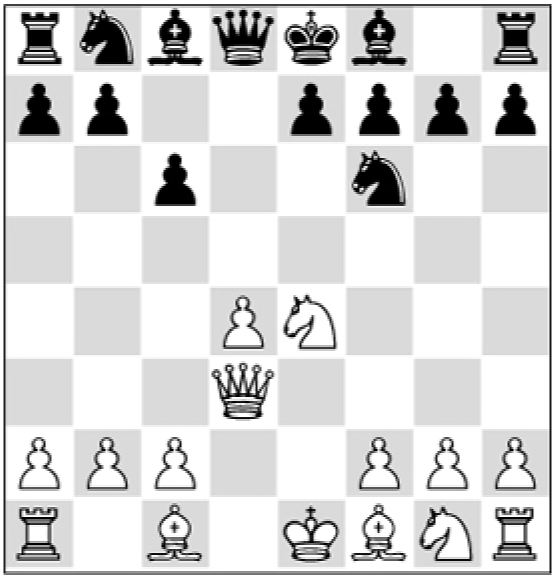
Black, to move, could force the win
White's last move was 1.♖b7-c7 (of course, not 1.♖b7-b8?? because of 1…♖f8+ and 2…♖xb8). Black responded with 1…♕xc7 and the game was drawn.
I subsequently pointed out the following win: **1…♖f1++ 2.♔xf1 ♘g3+ 3.♔e1 ♕e3+ 4.♔d1** Note the 'driving' effect; the king is already at d1 – and just a few moves ago was comfortably ensconced in his home! **4…♕e2+! 5.♔c1 ♕e1+ 6.♔c2 ♕xe4+** To the double-check has been added a twist that one recognizes, and which strikes us as unusual only because it usually plays out on a file and not, as here, along a diagonal. This line of play, a tactical maneuver, consists in disrupting the mutual protection of two enemy pieces by forcing a third piece between them. In the position under consideration, the king was lured to the c2-square between the queen at b1 and the bishop on e4. **7.♔c1 ♘e2+!** (Diagram 287), winning the queen and the game.

287



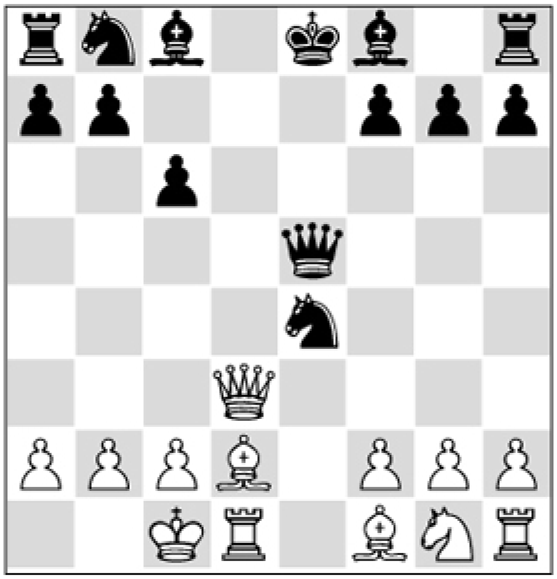
2. The following well-known little game was played between the ingenious Réti (White) and in his own way the no-less clever Dr. Tartakower: **1.e4 d6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♕d3**:

288



A quite unnatural move. **5…e5?** The somewhat theatrical-looking gesture on the part of the first player – 5.♕d3 – has worked. Black is intent on refuting it in brilliant fashion, but his idea proves impossible to carry out (for 5.♕d3 was not that bad) and thus White gets the better game. Correct was 5…♘xe4 6.♕xe4 ♘d7 and …♘f6, with a solid position. **6.dxe5 ♕a5+ 7.♗d2 ♕xe5 8.0-0-0 ♘xe4**:

289

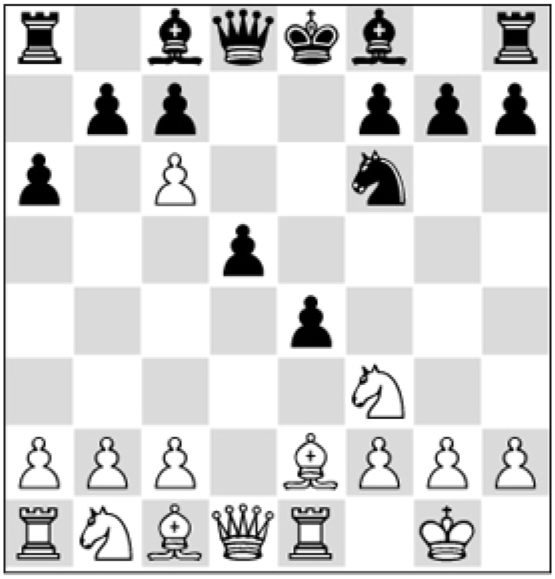


White wins

9.♛d8+ ♚xd8 10.♝g5++ ♚c7 11.♝d8#. If 10…♔e8, then 11.♖d8#. The final combination is really very pretty.

3. On 5 December 1910 I gave a simultaneous display in Pärnu (on the Baltic), on which occasion I played the following nice game vs. Pastor Ryckhoff (Black): **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝b5 ♞f6 4.0-0 d6 5.d4 ♞xe4? 6.d5 a6 7.♝d3 ♞f6** 7…♘e7 saved the piece, true, but not the game; e.g., 8.♗xe4 f5 9.♗d3 e4 10.♖e1 exf4 (or 10…♗xf4) 11.♕xf3 or 11.♕xd3, with a strong attack. **8.dxc6 e4 9.♜e1 d5 10.♝e2!!** (Diagram 290)
After forcing his opponent to protect the e-pawn with …d7-d5 White would have time to withdraw his pieces from the fork unscathed, but instead he moves the bishop in such a way as to surrender the knight.

290



10…exf3 Black does not see the danger and cosily pockets the knight. But now there comes an end filled with terrors! **11.cxb7 ♗xb7** If 11…fxe2, then simply 12.bxa8♕, since the pawn is pinned. **12.♗b5++** Double-check and mate.

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Chapter 9

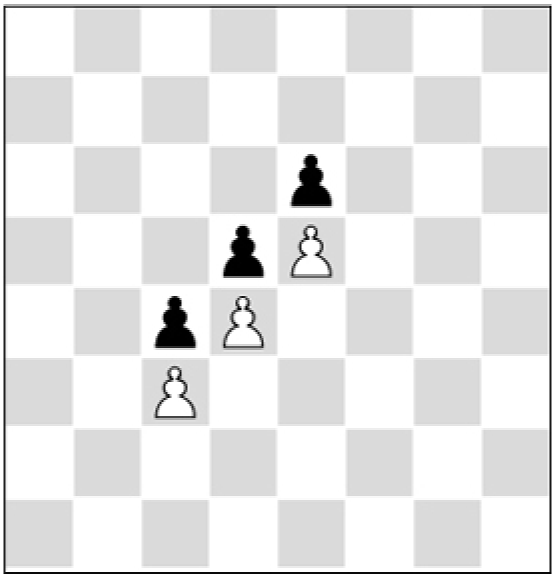
The Pawn Chain

1. General remarks and definitions. The base of the pawn chain. The concept of the two separate theaters of war.

After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 a black-white pawn chain has arisen. The pawns at d4, e5, e6, and d5 are the individual links in the chain; the pawn at d4 is to be understood as the base or foot of the white chain, while the pawn on e6 plays a similar role in Black’s pawn cluster.
Hence, we call the bottommost link of the chain, which supports all the higher-placed links, the ‘base’.

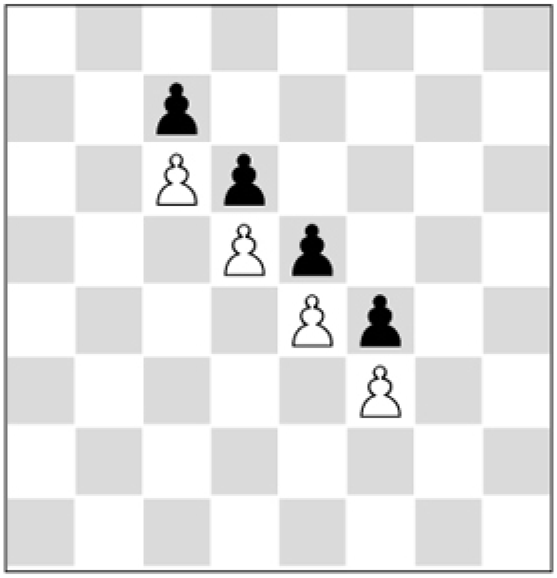
Every black-white pawn chain – in plain terms, the consecutive series of black and white pawns abutting one another on adjacent diagonals – divides the board into two halves. For the sake of convenience we shall call such a black-white pawn chain simply the pawn chain (see Diagrams 291 and 292).

291



Pawn chain

292



Pawn chain

The formation of the pawn chain

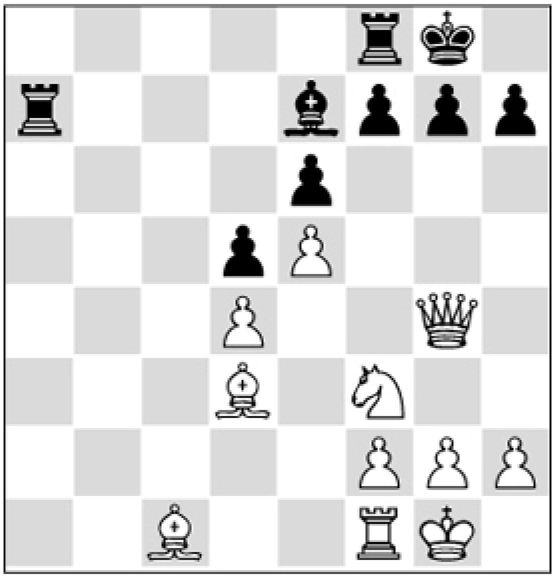
Before the student comes to grips with the material that follows, he might, without proceeding further, check to make sure that he can recall clearly and fully what we have said about the open file and the blockade of the passed pawn. Otherwise, he might refresh his memory, for both these chapters are indispensable to a proper understanding of what we are to discuss.

The question is this: after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5, White has the opportunity, as long as his pawn continues to stand on e4, to open the e-file with e4xd5 in order to undertake more or less permanent operations along this file (perhaps by creating a forward knight outpost at e5). With 3.e5 he forsakes this chance, and also resolves the tension in the center for no apparent reason. Why then does he do this? Well, I do not believe that the attacking energy that has accumulated in the white position before 3.e5 could suddenly (thanks to e4-e5) disappear. Rather, it must be there just as before, even if in a modified form. For e4-e5 above all else restrains the mobility of the black pawns, and therefore amounts to a blockade. But we know that pawns, especially those in the middle of the board, feel a powerful lust to expand; we therefore have inflicted on our opponent a not inconsiderable amount of suffering. Moreover, thanks to 3.e5, two new theaters of war have been created, one on Black's kingside and the other – in the center.

Toward the king's wing

See Diagram 293.

293



The kingside as a theater of war. The troops engaged here are the queen, the bishops, and the knight. The rook at f1 is held in reserve for a possible enemy counter …f7-f5; exf6 ♗xf6, for then the rook would intervene along the e-file

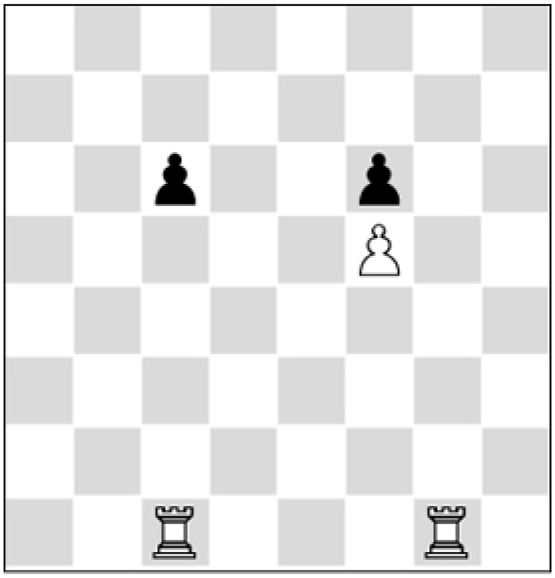
The e5-pawn in this position may be spoken of as a troop detachment that has gone ahead to form a wedge for the purpose of demobilizing Black's game. The e5-pawn takes the f6-square away from Black's knight and thus permits a ready approach by the white storm troops (the queen at g4). The black kingside, cramped by this same pawn, can also be besieged by other pieces, in particular the bishop at d3, the knight on f3, and the bishop on c1. If Black tries to defend himself by establishing a communication along his second rank with an eventual …f7-f5 (for example, with the rook posted on a7) our pawn at e5 will prove itself an excellent wedge-driver, in that the reuniting of Black's isolated kingside with the rest of his army would meet with considerable resistance. We mean: White attacks the point g7, Black pushes the f-pawn two steps forward so as to protect g7 along his second rank. This otherwise excellent defense then founders, however, on the fact that the e5-pawn lodges a vigorous protest to …f7-f5, namely e5xf6, when White, after the reply …♖xf6, would get the e-file and the e5-square belonging to it, with pressure on the backward pawn at e6. In the first case (the kingside as a theater of war) a white pawn at f4 would rather exert a disturbing influence, as its negative impact (as an obstruction to the c1-bishop and to any other of his own pieces that might wish to occupy or move through f4) would overshadow its positive effects.

Toward the center

Besides the cramping of the enemy kingside, e4-e5 pursues other and quite different objectives. In particular, White intends by e4-e5 to fix the black pawn in place on e6, in order later to target this pawn with f2-f4-f5, inasmuch as …e6xf5 would mean surrendering the base of the black pawn chain. But if Black omits this move, White can either construct a wedge by f5-f6 or choose f5xe6 f7xe6; ♖f1-f7-e7, which would mean the beginning of the end for the e6-pawn.

To better understand this association of ideas it would be advisable to examine more closely the basic unit ('germ-cell') of a flank, or enveloping, attack. Refer to Diagram 294.

294

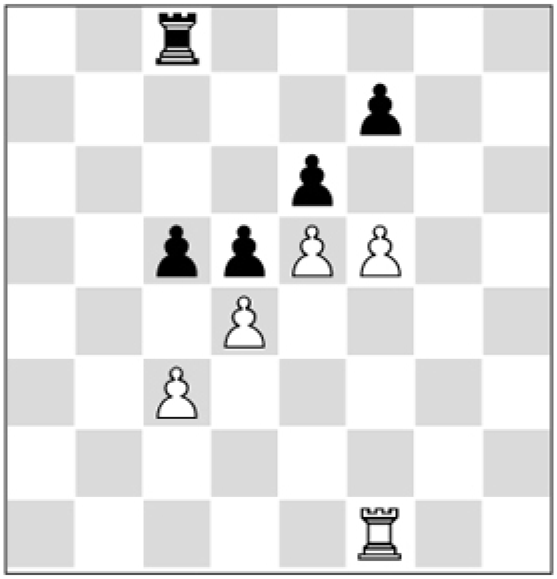


Left: a frontal attack
Right: a flank (enveloping) attack against the f6-pawn (germ-cell)

At the left we see the rook operating from the front: the object of attack is besieged at White’s leisure. On the right a frontal attack is out of the question, but White is planning the maneuver ♖g1-g6xf6 or ♖g1-g7-f7xf6. For our purpose it is important to emphasize that the white f5-pawn denotes a necessary element of White’s germ-cell. For if this pawn were absent, a frontal attack against the f6-pawn would be possible, and that would be far the easier course. Moreover, if this f6-pawn were not fixed where it is, an attack against it would make no sense, according to the principal that an object of attack should first be rendered immobile. It follows that the position shown in Diagram 294 constitutes the real germ-cell of the flank, or enveloping, attack.

Now that we have established this minor but worthwhile observation, the battle plan illustrated in Diagram 295 is seen to have its logical justification. For this plan works to bring about the formation we have just seen, providing us with the necessary preparation and leaving us with a good conscience (which is not unimportant). For if the operation shown under the heading ‘germ-cell’ does qualify as an attack, I think it should be clear that e4-e5 (forming a wedge), followed by f2-f4-f5, too, must be granted a similar significance.

295



Schematic representation of the central theater of war. The two opponents attack the respective bases of the pawn chains. The rooks lie in ambush, ready to break through!

Hence, the center, that is to say, the pawn at e6, is to be understood as a second theater of war.

To summarize: the move e4-e5, that is to say, the formation of a pawn chain, always creates two theaters of war. The cramped enemy wing constitutes one, the base of the opposing pawn chain comprises the other. And further: e4-e5 is inspired completely by the desire to attack. The attack that was present before e4-e5 has been transferred from d5 to the pawn at e6, which has been rendered immobile so that it can be exposed to attack by f2-f4-f5.

2. The attack against the pawn chain

The pawn chain as a blockade problem. How and why my philosophy of the pawn chain on the occasion of its first publication (1913, 'Wiener Schachzeitung') had to arouse a 'storm of indignation'. The attack against the base and the critical moment.

There was a time – before 1913 – when it was firmly held that a pawn chain, after the disappearance of one of its links, had to give up any claim to a joyful and prosperous existence. To have shown this view to be one based on prejudice is a service for which I must take credit, for already in 1911 I demonstrated in some games (with Salwe and

Levenfish, both at Karlsbad 1911, and with Tarrasch at San Sebastian 1912) that I am inclined to conceive of the pawn chain entirely as a problem of constriction. It was not a question of whether the links of the pawn chain were complete but solely of whether the enemy pawns remained cramped. How we achieve this, whether with pawns or pieces or even by rooks or bishops working from a distance, is immaterial! The essential thing is that the pawns should be hemmed in! This was my line of thinking at that time, a most revolutionary conception that I arrived at after an intensive study of the problem of the blockade – and which did not fail to arouse a storm of protest. In particular, people were chagrined by my postulate, ‘The watchword: mutual attacks against the bases of the respective pawn chains’. We cannot fail to quote from an article by Alapin, in which he rages against my theory. The old song: an innovator. Criticism is offensive as hell. But later, the new thing was accepted. And in recent years we even hear, ‘This is supposed to be new! We have always known this!’

I now quote the aforementioned passage of the well-known theoretician, Alapin. I quote it without changes and without permitting myself even a single word of defense. I let his reproaches rain down on my poor head and only emphasize that in this passage all the remarks in parentheses are not interjections by the attacked party (therefore by my humble self) but rather originate with Alapin. We now give Alapin the floor:

‘With regard to his so-called “philosophical” (!?…) reasons for 3.e5, they are stated as follows: “With 3.e5, White’s attack is supposedly to be ‘transferred from the point d5 to e6.’ (Before the move 3.e5? an ‘attack’ was certainly in effect, that of the d5-pawn against e4, for …dxe4 was a threat; the converse is not the case, however, for exd5 ‘threatened’, besides freeing the bishop on c8, absolutely nothing in the foreseeable future, which is why one cannot speak of a supposed ‘transfer’ of a non-existent white attack!…) After this ‘transfer’ (3.e5?), according to Nimzowitsch, ‘the watchword is a reciprocal attack on the respective bases of the pawn chains, consisting that is of …c7-c5 and f2-f4-f5’.

It is correct that after 3.e5?, Black, with 3…c5! immediately opens up an attack on the white pawn chain. But in this variation, is there anything known about the possibility f2-f4-f5 to the widest chess circles? In his collection of ten previously mentioned ‘successful’ real games even Nimzowitsch himself, each time, played ♘f3, without touching the f-pawn!? … Of his ‘reciprocal watchword’ there again is not the faintest shadow of a hint!?… Meanwhile, the all-important ‘philosophy’ (!?…) is something master Nimzowitsch sees in the ‘law’ that originates with him and which therefore appears on page 76, emphasized with boldface type: ‘The attack on a pawn chain can be transferred from a particular link in the chain to another’… That one can do this is certain, it is not forbidden!… Whether one succeeds in doing so depends on the opponent, circumstances, and luck… But what this ‘law’ (!?…) is really supposed to mean and why it is even called ‘philosophy’ (??…) are completely beyond me.”

So far Alapin! When I read these lines, it is as though the pain-filled joy that the creation of new values gives a man may be savored again. How glorious! Only, look at how indignant the man is, that it is the new, the innovative, that causes the veins on his forehead to bulge! And I, I was this innovator!

Today we know that all the things I said then about the pawn chain are incontestable truths.

But we – hence the sympathetic readers of my book – also know that:

(a) after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 White’s attack on d5 very much exists. Alapin did not know it, since for him my theory of the open file was not yet known; and further:

(b) it is universally recognized today that, in positions involving e4-e5 (either on the third move or later), the advance f2-f4-f5 is demonstrably the correct plan.

We can learn a good deal by a closer examination of why, after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 d5 3.e5, the attack …c7-c5 should at first command the board rather than f2-f4-f5. As we have already emphasized, the tendency on the part of both White and Black to cripple the other’s pawn chain is two-sided. White’s pawns wish to blockade Black’s, and vice versa. Now, after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 it is the black pawns that are restrained in their movement toward the center, while the corresponding white pawns have overstepped the middle of the board (compare the e5- and e6-pawns). Hence we may with justification regard the white pawns as the restraining, and the black as the restrained, pawns. For the pawns' lust to expand is of course greatest in the direction of the center. Therefore, Black is more justified in his attack with …c7-c5 than White is with his corresponding attack on the other wing (f2-f4-f5). The threat f2-f4-f5 as such is always present, nevertheless. When the attack …c7-c5 has run its course to no effect then it is White's turn to proceed with his own pawn push.

The fact that in many games this threat is not successfully carried out only goes to show that White has enough on his hands in defending against …c7-c5, or else that he has chosen the 'first' of the two theaters of war, namely the cramping of the kingside through e4-e5 (see Section 1 above, 'The Concept of the Two Separate Theaters of War').

With respect to the transference of the attack, the student will soon see how important I think this law is. But let us proceed systematically.

3. The attack against the base as a strategic necessity

The sweeping away of the links in the enemy pawn chain is undertaken only for the sake of freeing our own restrained pawns! Hence the problem of the pawn chain essentially reduces to one of blockade!

Recognizing an opposing restricting pawn chain as an enemy and going up against it are the same thing. We formulate this as follows:

A freeing operation in the vicinity of a pawn chain can never be set in motion too soon.

This struggle for liberation will be carried out as follows: we first direct our attack against the base, which we attack with a pawn. By means of entreaties and threats we seek to cut off the base pawn from its associates in the chain. After this, our attacking wrath is to be directed against the next opponent, namely the new base of the chain.

An example: After **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5** the black pawn mass (e6 and d5) is clearly under restraint. The attack against the cramping white chain is, by our rule, to be undertaken without delay, that is, by 3…c5.

But not by 3…f6, for the link of the chain at e5 corresponds rather to an architectural ornament, while the pawn on d4 represents the foundation of White's entire pawn chain edifice. If we wish to undermine a building, we do not of course begin with the architectural ornaments, rather we should blow up the foundation. The ornaments will then be dispatched automatically.

After 3…c5 White can play differently. Black's plan will emerge most clearly if White plays completely naïvely, that is to say, as if he had no inkling of the problem of the pawn chain, say as follows: **3…c5 4.dxc5 ♗xc5 5.♘c3? f6!**.

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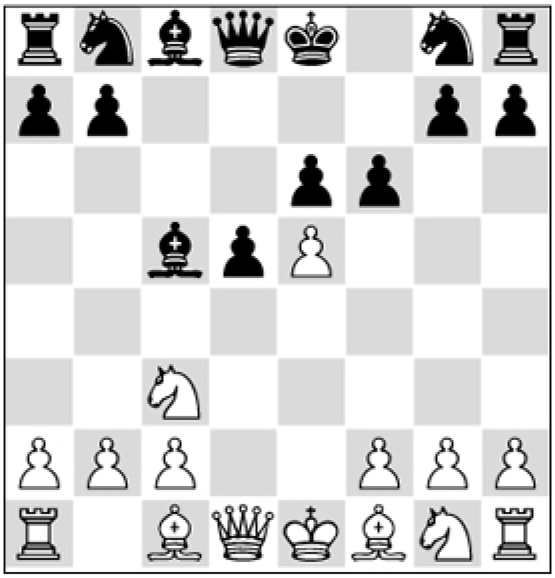
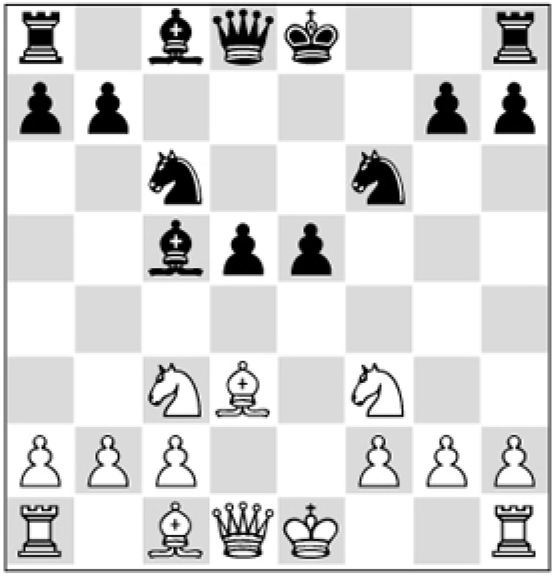


The play has taken its logical course. First, the Ataman at d4 was eliminated, and now the e5-pawn gets it in the neck. All this in fine order! Just like the hero in the cinema who, completely alone, goes up against superior numbers. How does he manage this? Quite simply. He deals with the first one, knocks him down, then turns to the next one, strikes him with a powerful blow, crippling him, then deals the third man a terrible blow, etc., until, finally, all of them are lying there like a picture of misery. So, in fine order! And always start by proceeding against the Ataman (the base of the pawn chain)!

After 5…f6, White plays **6.exf6** As naïve as before; better in any case was 6.♘f3. **6…♘xf6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗d3 e5!** (Diagram 297)

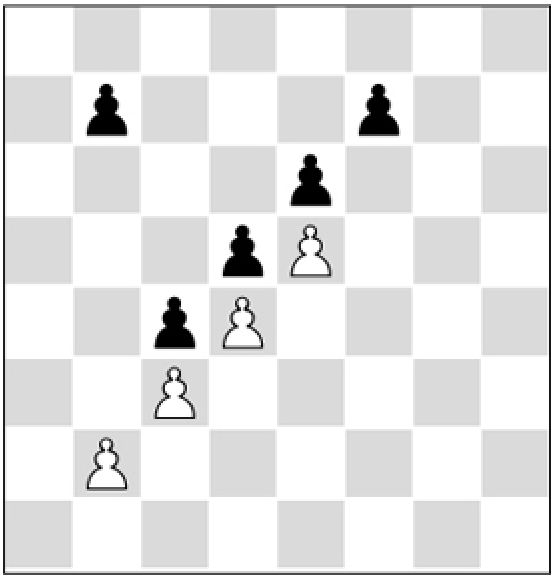
297



Thanks to White’s faulty strategy, Black’s freeing action, which as a rule tends to require 20 to 25 moves, might already be regarded as ended. First, Black compelled the white pawn links in the chain, including the base, to voluntarily disappear one after the other (by the captures dxc5 and exf6) and after this let his own pawns march forward triumphantly with …e6-e5. This advance, so keenly desired by Black, provides an explanation for the energetic measures on his part on the third and following moves, so that his constricted pawns should recover their mobility. This is all that Black intends and longs for. Accordingly, these pawns, once advanced, really are imbued with an especially warlike spirit, as though they wish to exact bitter vengeance for the humiliation they had to suffer. Or does the uncompromising advance of the liberated central pawns correspond rather to an easily explainable desire to spread out on the part of those who had been bound and gagged? Whatever the case, the eventual advance of the formerly constricted pawns is the necessary consequence, indeed the goal, of every freeing action in the vicinity of the pawn chain.

Diagram 298 below illustrates another example.

298



Here the right course for Black is an assault against the chain with …b7-b5-b4, to provoke cxb4. But not …f7-f6?

Here, the pawn on c3 constitutes the base of the white pawn chain (and not the pawn on b2, it should be noted, for this pawn is not associated with an opposite number in the white-black pawn lattice, as there is no black pawn at b3) and against this base we send forward the b-pawn to storm it, hence by …b7-b5-b4. After the induced cxb4, the d4-pawn would then be promoted to the replacement base pawn, but, unlike its predecessor at c3, it would not be protected. The unprotected base – that is, unprotected by a pawn – constitutes a weakness and thereby gives the opponent occasion for a long-term siege, which we shall treat in Section 5, below.

In the example just mentioned, …f7-f6? (instead of the correct …b7-b5-b4) would have to be labeled a mistake, for after the fall of the e5-pawn the white pawn chain would remain intact.

We are now on the way to a real understanding of the matter: the freeing operations in the realm of the pawn chain correspond entirely to the struggle against a troublesome blockader (Chapter 4), hence our problem reduces to one of blockade.

4. The transfer of the blockade rules from the ‘passed pawn’ to the ‘chain’

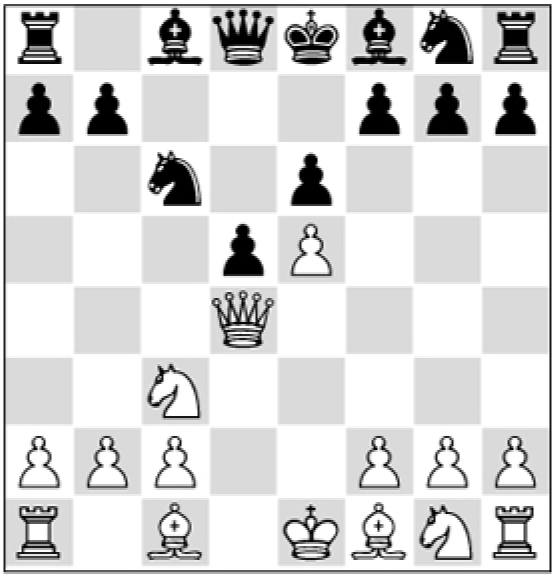
The exchange maneuver (to replace a strong enemy blockader with one that is 'more accessible') applied to the pawn chain.

It is clear to us, after studying Chapter 4, that *every* enemy piece that stops an otherwise mobile pawn is to be understood as a blockader. And yet it must cause surprise that after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 d5 3.e5 we should agree that the white pawns on d4 and e5 are to be regarded as blockaders according to our rule. What is surprising is that it comes across as completely strange to see a pawn (!) designated as a blockader, since pawns usually figure as the blockaded agents – the role of the blockader is reserved for the pieces! Quite right, but pawns in a chain are pawns of a higher order and thus differ in their functions from the other pawns. To perceive and treat the pawns in a chain as blockaders would then appear to be quite correct.

Now that we have been enriched with this knowledge, let us turn our attention to the motif 'the exchange maneuver on the blockading square' in the case of pawn chains. Such an exchange has its inner justification only when the new blockader proves to be weaker than the old one. In the realm of the pawn chain, too, this comparison is likewise indicated.

Example: After **1.e4 e5 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5! 4.♘c3** Black can try to replace the blockader at d4 with a new one (the queen at d4). In fact, after the further moves **4…cxd4! 5.♕xd4 ♘c6** (Diagram 299) the queen turns out to be a blockader that is difficult to maintain in her position, hence the exchange maneuver proves to be correct.

299



This despite a possible **6.♗b5**, for after **6…♗d7 7.♗xc6 bxc6** Black would have the two bishops and a mobile central mass, giving him the advantage.

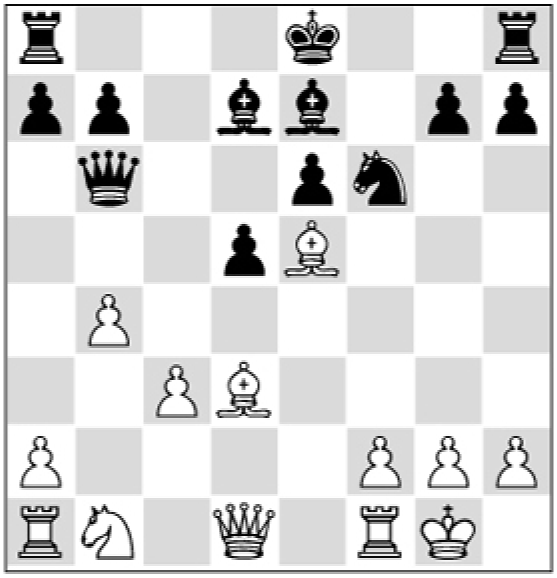
On the other hand, this exchange maneuver would be rather weak after **1.e4 e5 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 3.♗e3**, for after **4…cxd4 5.♗xd4** the bishop would be an exceedingly tough customer (strong blockader), and a further exchange of it with **5…♘xd4 6.♕xd4 ♘e7 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♕f4** would result in the expulsion of the blockading troop, certainly, but only with a loss of time caused by the double-movement of Black's king's knight.

White stands quite well here: his pieces are positioned as they would be for a kingside attack, but also exert a sufficient influence on the center. For example, **9…f6** (to roll up the white pawn chain) **10.♗b5 a6 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.0-0** and Black will never succeed in making the e6-pawn mobile; for if he ever plays …fxe5 the move ♘xe5 would follow, lodging this knight at e5.

By this example we have progressed in our understanding of the pawn chain. All exchanges in the vicinity of a pawn chain occur only with a view to replacing the strong blockader with a weaker one; the 'good nose' we picked up in Chapter 4 will be of immense help to us here. I think we have to decide in each individual case whether the blockader in question is strong or weak, elastic or inelastic, etc.; the ability to discern this accurately will be of great service to us.

See, for example, Diagram 300.

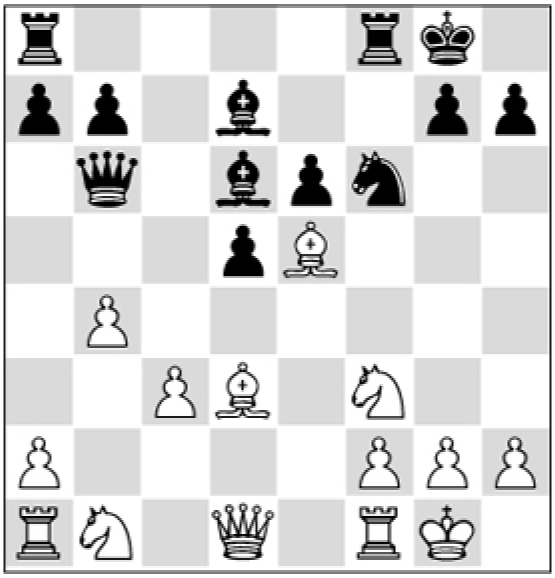
300



Occupying the points e5 and d4 for the duration is White’s immediate problem. Which move is better for this purpose, ♘d2 or ♕c2?

Here, ♕c2 would be a weak move, despite the inherent sharp threat of ♗xf6 followed by ♗xh7. The error lies in the fact that White should instead have done something for the defense of his blockading wall, therefore something like ♘d2 0-0;♘f3. On ♕c2?, on the other hand, there might occur …0-0!; ♗xf6 ♖xf6; ♗xh7+ ♔h8; ♗g6 (or ♗d3) e5!. White has won a pawn, but Black has overcome the blockade and now stands ready to march forward in the center. White may well be lost.

301



To create a permanent blockade of the d5- and e6-pawns, which is better, 15.♗d4 ♕c7 16.♕e2 or the immediate 15.♕e2?

In Diagram 301 the sequence 15.♗d4 ♕c7 16.♕e2 might be considered, to be able to follow up with 17.♘e5. But this plan to expand the radius of the blockade effect cannot be carried out, for after 16.♕e2 there follows 16…♘g4!! 17.h3 e5!, when the e-pawn's lust to expand will assert itself despite all counter-measures taken against it. Correct, instead, is 15.♕e2; there follows 15…♖ac8 (or 15…♗xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖ac8 17.c4!) 16.♗d4! ♕c7 17.♘e5 and Black is more or less blockaded.

Hence, we say that the line 15.♗d4 ♕c7 16.♕e2 is bad, since the blockader positioned behind the bishop – the blockade-pretender, the knight at f3 – would only have a slight blockading effect, i.e., it would never succeed in reaching e5.

When in the next section we examine the notes to my game with Salwe (from which we just excerpted the diagrammed position) we will confirm our exchange sequence with additional examples.

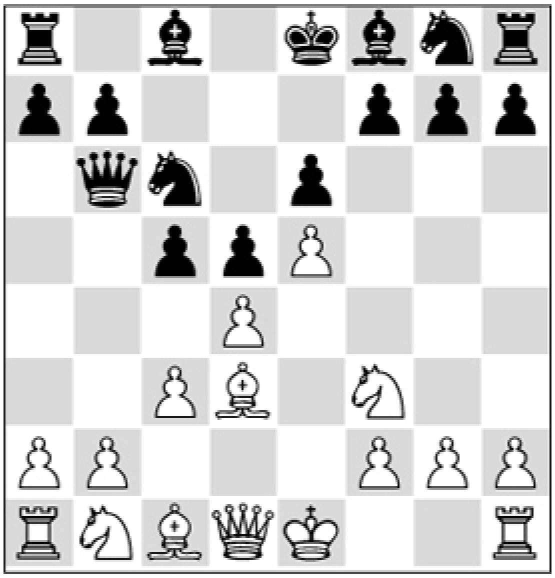
5. The concept of the surprise attack and that of siege warfare, applied to the region of the chain. The attacker at the crossroads!

If the attacker has played in accordance with the explanations given in this chapter (that is, attacking the base and properly applying the exchange maneuver on the blockading square), he will not seldom be rewarded with the complete freedom of his formerly constricted pawns. But on occasion the resources given in this chapter will bring the struggle to a dead point, and in such cases a fresh strategy is called for. See the following game, instructive from A to Z, which moreover I consider to be the stem game played according to the new philosophy of the center that I introduced.

Nimzowitsch-Salwe
Karlsbad 1911
French Defense

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♕b6 As we can see, Black tries over and over, with entreaties and threats, to induce his opponent to give up his base, the pawn at d4. Just this inclination on the part of Black, contemplating the ensuing rolling-up of the whole chain, we classify under the category of surprise attack. Note the move 5…♕b6 as such. Queen moves in the opening are as a rule out of place; here, however, the pawn chain is the dominating principle. The weal or woe of the pawn chain determines all our actions! **6.♗d3** See Diagram 302.

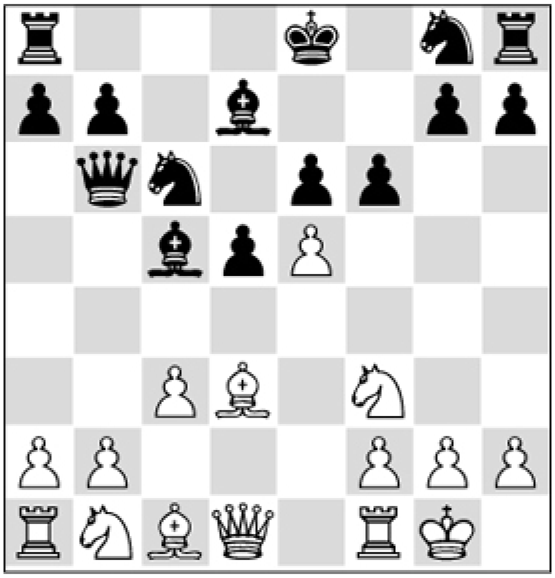
302



Black to move. He is at the crossroads between the method of surprise attack and a positional struggle. The first plan lies in …♗d7, in order finally to induce White to make the move dxc5. The second consists in …c5xd4; cxd4 followed by a protracted siege of the d4-pawn

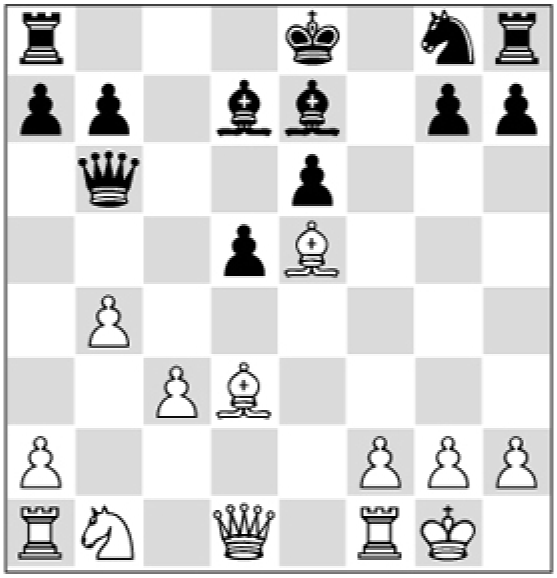
6…♝d7 A very plausible move. Since White continues to delay playing dxc5, Black looks to help make the difficult decision easier for him by playing …♖c8 ! The right course, however, was 6…cxd4 7.cxd4, heading into entirely new waters. The game saw **7.dxc5!! ♝xc5 8.0-0 f6**.

303



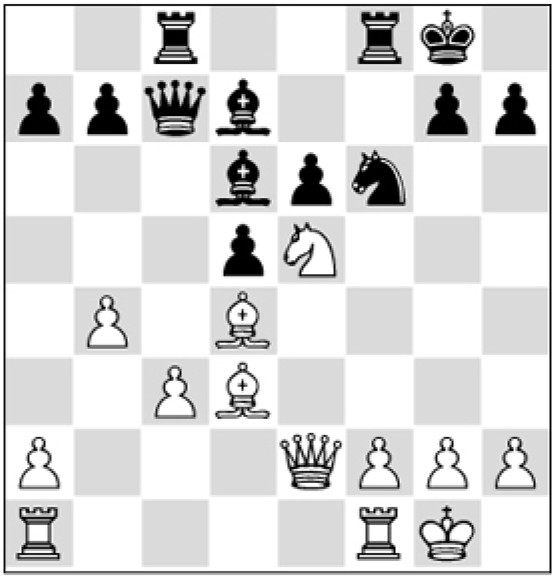
Black now feels triumphant and with relish thrusts himself on the last-remaining offspring of the once so proud chain-family, to destroy it. His war cry is ‘Room for the e6-pawn!’ But matters turn out differently. **9.b4** To be able to provide e5 with an enduring defense. 9.♕e2 also would have protected e5, but not for long, for after this move there would come the exchange 9…fxe5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♕xe5 ♘f6, when the blockader of e5 is easily driven away. **9…♝e7 10.♝f4 fxe5** Again the exchange operation we have discussed more than once. This time, however, the inner justification for it is lacking, as the new blockader (the bishop on e5) shows itself to be a most tenacious fellow. **11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.♝xe5**

304



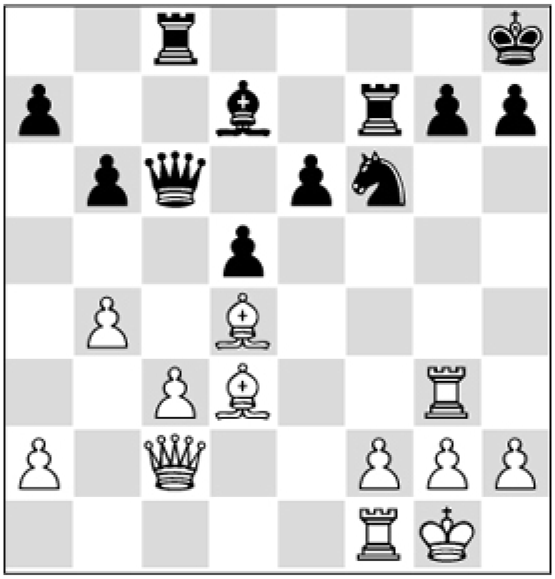
12…♞f6 For the otherwise desirable 12…♗f6 would fail to 13.♕h5+ g6 14.♗xg6+ hxg6 15.♕xg6+ ♔e7 16.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 17.♕g7+. **13.♞d2** That the possible win of a pawn after 13.♕c2? 0-0! is deceptive and treacherous is a fact we already pointed out in connection with Diagram 300. **13…0-0 14.♞f3!** The blockading troops are to be reinforced by the knight. **14…♝d6** See Diagram 301. 14…♗b5 would avail little, for 15.♗d4 ♕a6 16.♗xb5 ♕xb5 17.♘g5 would win a pawn. **15.♛e2** We have already explained that 15.♗d4 here would be premature. **15…♜ac8 16.♝d4 ♛c7 17.♞e5**

305



Now the immobility of the blocked pawn is greater than ever. White has used his resources very economically. The possibility of a successful occupation of d4 and e5, however, hung by a hair, on a minute exploitation of the terrain, namely the points d4, e5, c2, and e2. **17…♝e8 18.♖ae1 ♝xe5 19.♝xe5 ♛c6 20.♝d4!** To force the bishop on e8, which has been peering out toward h5, to come to a decision. **20…♝d7 21.♛c2** The decisive regrouping. **21…♖f7 22.♖e3 b6 23.♖g3 ♚h8**

306



24.♝xh7 In Chapter 6 we became familiar with the great effectiveness of centralized pieces – toward the flanks as well. **24…e5** 24…♘xh7 would lose because of 25.♕g6. **25.♝g6 ♜e7 26.♜e1 ♛d6 27.♝e3 d4 28.♝g5 ♜xc3 29.♜xc3 dxc3 30.♛xc3** and White won: **30…♚g8 31.a3 ♚f8 32.♝h4 ♝e8 33.♝f5 ♛d4 34.♛xd4 exd4 35.♜xe7 ♚xe7 36.♝d3 ♚d6 37.♝xf6 gxf6 38.h4** and Black resigned.

It is well to take a retrospective look at the game just discussed. After the introductory moves 1.e4 e5 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♕b6 6.♗d3 Black could (and should) have steered into calmer waters with 6…cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗d7 with a potential …♘e7-f5. But he preferred to try and induce his opponent to abandon his pawn chain completely. The plan was:

(1) to force his opponent to play dxc5 and exf6;

(2) to drive away any blockading pieces that might occupy their former squares;

(3) to advance the liberated center pawns in triumph.

In the above game this plan failed because the replacement blockaders just couldn't be driven away, that is to say, they exerted a strong blockading effect. For us, however, it is important to establish the following two postulates:

(a) To the strangled (i.e., hemmed-in) pawns it makes no difference whether they are throttled by pawns or pieces – the one is just as painful as the other.

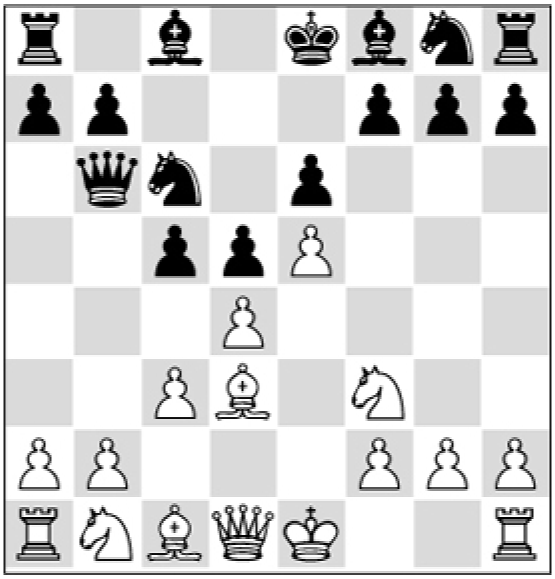
(b) Hence the elimination of the constricting pawns in itself does not imply a more or less complete freeing operation, for any replacement blockaders, the pieces, still have to be driven away.

Whether and to what degree this latter proves feasible is a question of decisive importance.

We can shed light on the relations between pawn and piece as follows: 'It is true that it is precisely the pawns that are best suited to building up the center, since they are the most stable. But pieces stationed in the center can very well take the place of the pawns.' This quote is taken from my article 'The Surrender of the Center – a Preconception.' We shall often return to this article and for now will only say that we are inclined to regard any initiated, but not completed, freeing action (such as Salwe’s attempt in the game just examined) as harmful – that is to say, harmful to the player who is ostensibly freeing himself. And now let us return to the position in Diagram 302.

5a. The positional struggle, or the protracted siege of the unprotected base. Repeated bombardment. The defending pieces are standing in each other’s way! How can we maintain the pressure? The genesis of new weaknesses. The base as a weakness in the endgame.

302



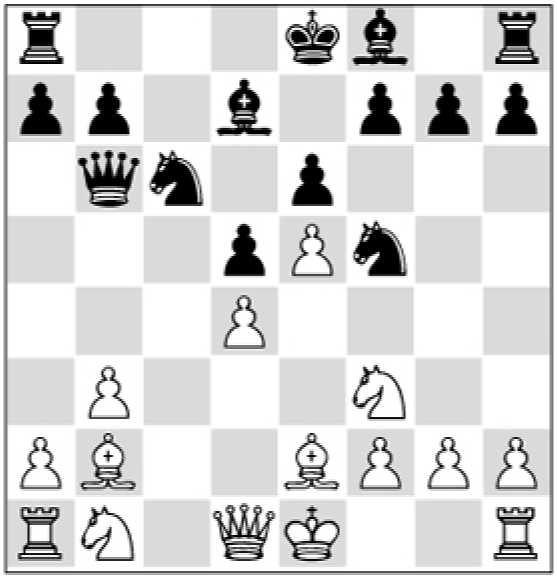
(reproduced)

Since in this position the move 6…♗d7 appears to offer little benefit, Black, as we have stressed more than once, would have done much better to play 6…cxd4. What would this move amount to? Well, the white pawn base at d4 is thereby rendered completely immobile – the pawn is fixed at d4, as we are wont to say. Before …cxd4 was played White’s d4-pawn, for good or ill, could leave its square (by dxc5), but now this is no longer possible.

We must be clear about one thing, that by playing 6…cxd4 Black has to resign himself to the not insignificant fact that his ambitious dream of forcing his opponent into complete capitulation in the domain of the pawn chain has gone to the grave. But in place of this Black gets slight but very real possibilities. The d4-pawn will be attacked by several pieces, not so much because the capture of the d4-pawn is likely but so that the opposing pieces will assume passive (because defensive) roles. Our goal here is an ideal one: the advantage of having aggressive positions for his pieces (as discussed in Chapter 6, Section 2).

The continuation could be **6…cxd4 7.cxd4 ♝d7**. Threatening 8…♘xd4, which before 7…♗d7 would fail to the check on b5, e.g., 7…♘xd4?? 8.♘xd4 ♕xd4 9.♗b5+, winning the queen. **8.♝e2** On 8.♗d3, 8…♘b4 could follow, when Black gets the advantage of the two bishops. **8…♞e7!** Whether it be slow or quick, Black chooses the development that puts the base of the chain under threat. And quite rightly, for in closed games, i.e., those characterized by the presence of pawn chains, it is precisely the said chain that is the one valid guiding principle. **9.b3 ♞f5 10.♝b2** (Diagram 307)

307

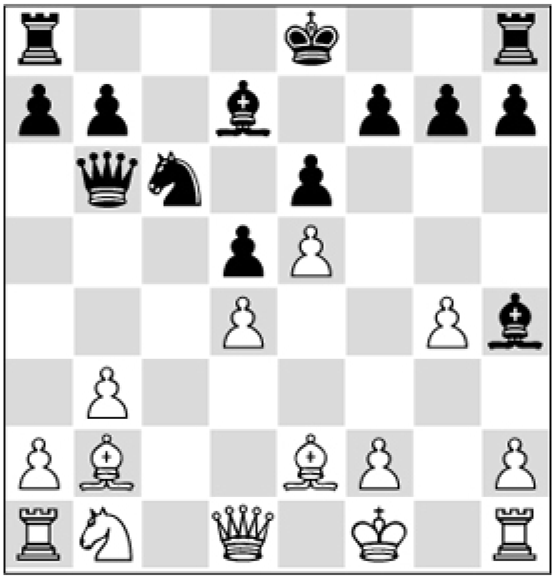


The base at d4 is subjected to pressure. The typical siege of an ‘unprotected’ base

10…♝b4+! This check reveals most starkly the darker side of a forced defense by many pieces – puts it, as it were, in the clearest light: the pieces are in each other’s way! **11.♚f1** For both 11.♘c3 and 11.♘d2 would cost White one of his defenders. **11…♝e7** This originates with Tarrasch. The student should ponder the fundamental idea on which this move is based. If he is to sustain the pressure on the d4-pawn, Black must never allow the prevailing equilibrium (3:3 for and against d4) to be disturbed to his disadvantage. The attacking pieces must therefore strive to maintain their attacking position. To this end, 11…h5 could be played (to prevent g2-g4); the text move achieves the same goal in another way. If 12.g4 at once, the reply would be 12…♘h4; one attacker and one defender would disappear and the status quo (2:2) would be re-established.

(See Diagram 307a.)

307a



The status quo (2:2) would be re-established after the knight exchange

The typical strategy in each particular case is made clear by the following postulates:

(a) The enemy base, once fixed in place, should be attacked by several pieces.

(b) By this means we shall attain at the very least the ideal advantage of the more aggressively placed pieces. This advantage will find its expression in the fact that our opponent will tend to experience certain difficulties in development. Worth mentioning also is the limited elasticity, or capacity for maneuvering, of the defending pieces. For instance, in the case of a sudden attack on the other wing the defending pieces will not be able to keep pace with the attacking forces and will lag behind.

(c) We should seek to maintain the pressure on the base for as long as possible, but at least until fresh weaknesses appear in the opposite camp (the ‘fresh’ weaknesses appear as the logical consequence of our opponent’s difficulties in development).

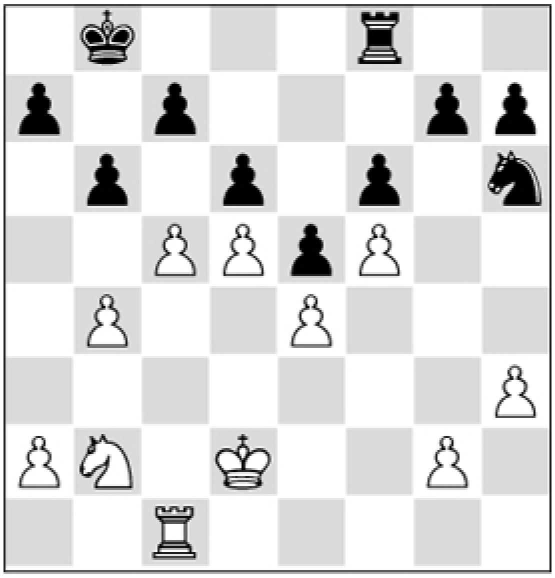
(d) Once this pressure is in place, the battle plan is modified. The original weakness (the d4-pawn) will be released from our grip and the new one – will be assaulted with the greatest energy! And only much later, perhaps not until the endgame, will the weak enemy base again be ‘promoted’ to being our object of attack.

(e) In the final analysis, the weak base is to be seen as an endgame weakness, inasmuch as the specific instrument of attack (the open file next to the weakness, therefore in our case the c-file) is fully realized only in the endgame phase (…♖c8-c4xd4 or …♖c8-c2-d2xd4).

(f) The attacker should never forget that he, too, has a pawn base that is in need of defense. If, in our example, White gets to the point where he has rehabilitated his part of the pawn chain – he has shaken off the pressure against d4 –, he can conduct an attack with f2-f4-f5 against the base of Black’s chain at e6 or perhaps launch an attack with pieces against the black kingside position, hampered as it is by the pawn on e5, and turn around the lance completely.

The application of (a) will hardly present any particular difficulties to the student. See Diagram 308.

308



After 1.cxd6 cxd6 the fixed pawn at d6 should be attacked with pieces

The chain we are concerned with is e4, d5, e5, d6. The base of Black’s chain is at d6. White now plays **1.cxd6 cxd6 2.♖c6 ♘f7 3.♘c4 ♖d8** If 3…♖c8, then 4.b4 ♖xc6 5.dxc6, with a superior knight ending. **4.a4!** To maintain the attacker, the knight on c4, in its place. White now has the base pawn at d6 under pressure and possesses the ideal advantage of the more aggressive piece placements (the c4-knight is more aggressive than the f7-knight, etc.) mentioned under (b). This advantage could be exploited either by 5.b5 followed perhaps by ♔c3 and a4-a5 or by turning to the kingside (5.h4 then ♔e3-f3-g4-h5 followed by g2-g4-g5; the counter …h7-h6 would allow the king’s entry via g6).

Much more difficult for the student is the assimilation of the content discussed in points (c) and (d). The direct exploitation of a pawn weakness is really not a matter for the middlegame (see point (e)). All that we may hope to achieve in this situation is to cause our opponent to suffer for a considerable period under the disadvantages of defensive duties that have been forced on him. If, as a result of these difficulties, a fresh weakness should appear in the enemy camp, which is by no means improbable, it is not only permitted – no, it is absolutely indicated – that the attacker let go of his pressure on the pawn base and dedicate himself to the exploitation of the new weakness. The more distant (geographically and logically) the two weaknesses are from one another, the better for us! This relation between these weaknesses was more or less unknown to the pseudo-classical school.

Tarrasch, for instance, used to keep the chosen base under attack with relentless persistence, or at least remain true to the wing he had chosen to operate on (see Paulsen-Tarrasch, Game 17). In contrast to this we place great emphasis on the principle that the enemy base can only be exploited completely in the endgame (see point (e)), or, more precisely:

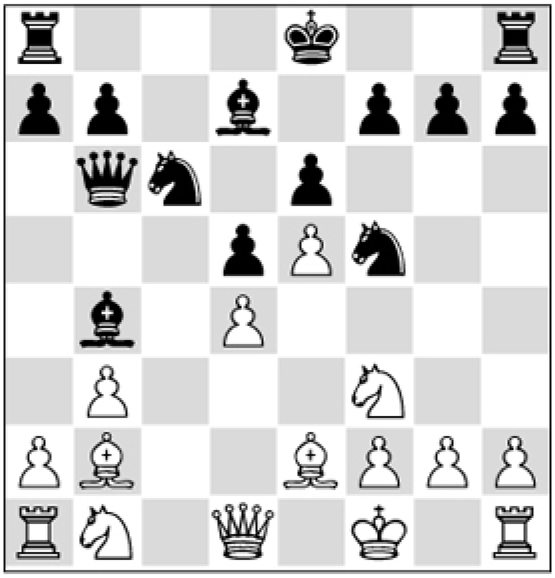
In the endgame the aim is a direct, that is to say actual, conquest of the base that serves as our object of attack.

In the middlegame the bombardment of this target can and should help create only indirect advantages.

For example, suppose that Black, already in the middlegame, is attacking the base of the enemy pawn chain. The enemy pieces will get in each other's way, difficulties in development will arise, and White will find himself compelled to create new weaknesses in his own camp in his attempt to remove those difficulties. The latest weakness is to be regarded as the indirect fruit of our siege operation. The existence of an 'old flame' is to be forgotten entirely, and all of one's fury is to be directed against the 'new'. And only in the endgame does it happen that we take notice of her again, the 'once beloved'. In the endgame, then, the base may again become the main object of attack!

As an example of this indirect exploitation of a weakened enemy base, Diagram 309 may serve.

309



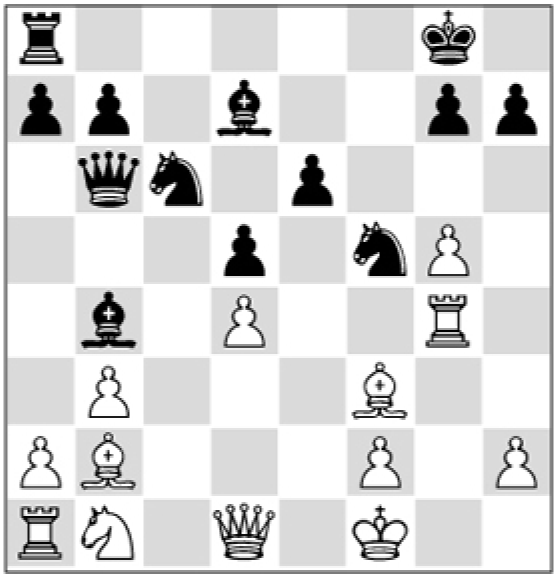
Black to move; how is the pressure against d4 to be maintained? The king position on f1 is a disadvantage. How can this be made clear (without consideration of d4)?

After **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 ♛b6 6.♝d3 cxd4! 7.cxd4 ♝d7 8.♝e2 ♞ge7 9.b3 ♞f5 10.♝b2**, **10…♝b4+** saw White (Paulsen) forced to play 11.♔f1, giving up the right to castle. Thus the pressure on d4 has assumed a tangible form. Black's task now is no longer one of keeping up the pressure on d4 (which would be achieved with 11…h5 or 11…♗e7 – and if 12.g4, then 12…♘h4 – with undiminished attacking fury against d4). Rather, the second player should give up his play against the base at d4 and do everything to reveal ♔f1 as 'weak' and to exploit it. Admittedly, this is only possible through a rather concealed exchange sacrifice. Incidentally, this variation, originating with the author, belongs among my favorite combinations, illustrating clearly the affiliation between 'principle' and 'combination'. (I mean, finding this combination was granted me only because I was familiar with the correctness of the principle, 'Away from the base!'.)

Look again at Diagram 309. After **11.♚f1** I played **11…0-0**. If White now plays, say, 12.♗d3, to relieve the burden on d4, there follows 12…f6 13.♗xf5 exf5 with the 'two bishops' and advantage to Black. The main variation after 11.♔f1 0-0!! lies in the sequence **12.g4 ♞h6**

13.♖g1 f6! 14.exf6 ♖xf6! 15.g5 ♖xf3! 16.♗xf3 (or 16.gxh6 ♖f7) **16…♘f5 17.♖g4**

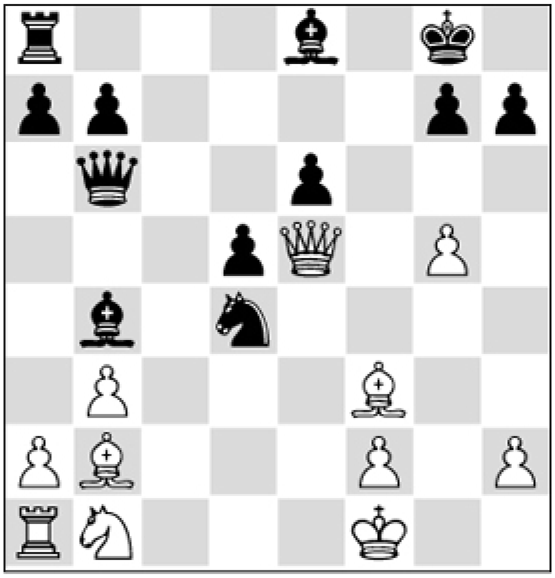
310



Position after the ensuing clarification of White's disadvantageous ♔f1. Despite his material advantage White stands poorly

White's desolate kingside and the weakly defended points on the f-file should in my view be enough to give him a lost game. We offer only one small variation: **17…♗e8** (17…♖f8 is also good enough) **18.♕e2 ♘cxd4 19.♖xd4! ♘xd4 20.♕e5** (Diagram 311). The last chance!

311



20…♝b5+ 21.♚g2 ♞f5 22.♝xd5 On 22.♘c3 there follows 22…♗xc3 23.♗xc3 d4, etc. **22…exd5 23.♛xf5 ♜f8 24.♛xd5+ ♜f7!** A self-pin for the sake of safeguarding g7 against a possible ♕d4. **25.♛d4 ♝c5** and White has to resign.

The decision took place, logically enough, on the kingside. The second player was able to fully exploit the new weakness without any concern about the old one. The student should pay particular attention to the way Black, starting at move 11, pivots away from the center (the base at d4) and toward the white kingside that has been weakened by 11.♔f1.

As a counterpart to the maneuver just demonstrated we would like to emphasize that, in Diagram 309, 11…♗e7, after 12.g3 and ♔g2 and the subsequent safeguarding and relief of the d4-pawn, would give White good chances, for after the consolidation of his position the first player can very well ‘turn the tables’ (see under (f), above). What is meant here is the assault against the black kingside, which is cramped by the e5-pawn (see Game 18, Nimzowitsch-Tarrasch).

Before we proceed further, we wish to impress upon the student in particular that he should practice his ability to make good use of his opponent’s weak base pawn in the endgame. We recommend the study of Game 15 and, further, the application of the following method. Set up a pawn chain on the board: e.g., White with pawns d4 and e5, Black with pawns on d5 and e6. Give to each player some more pawns (White: a2, b2, f2, g2, and h2; Black: a7, b7, f7, g7, h7) and try to take advantage of the weakness of d4 in pure endgame play with the rooks on the board or a rook and minor piece for each side.

6. The transfer of the attack

In the position in Diagram 302, Black had the choice, as we have encountered more than once, between two different lines of play, namely between 6…♗d7, with an ongoing surprise attack, and 6…cxd4, with a positional siege directed against the fixed base of the white pawn chain at d4.

It is a given that there must come a time when Black will be forced to make this choice. It is never possible to hold off making a choice between two lines of play for as long as one would like – least of all in the case of a pawn chain!

And this for the simple reason that the defender, who is relying in a suspenseful, disputable position (for we are dealing with just such a position here) on opportunities to fight back, can threaten to strike out and free himself. If our opponent’s threats do in fact reach fruition, we are forced to make an immediate choice between the two lines.

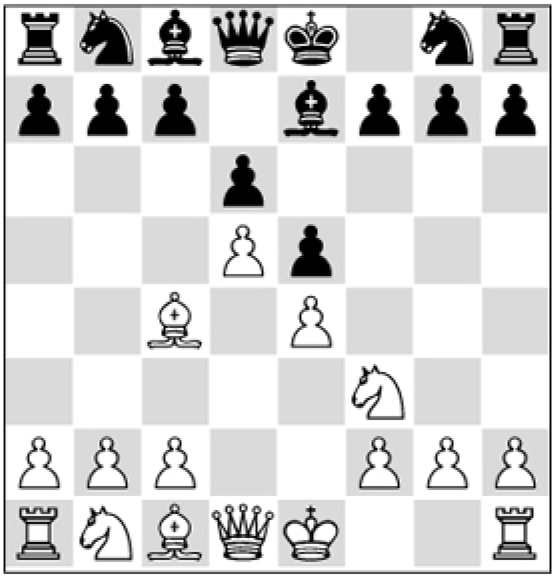
Another circumstance that forces a decision occurs when our opponent creates threats on another wing. In such a circumstance we would have to decide on as sharp a counter-action as possible, since any further dallying with the two different plans would no longer be appropriate.

Whereas up to now the discussion has concerned itself only with the choice between two distinct methods of attack, the object of attack (the d4-square in our example) as such remained fixed and was therefore not in doubt. It will be shown in what follows how painful even the choice of an attacking object can sometimes be.

We are concerned here with a pawn chain that we are to attack. What is there about this that is questionable, our friendly reader will ask. ‘Of course we direct our attack against the base of the chain.’ Quite so! But what if for some reason the base just cannot be shaken? Would it not be more opportune to direct the attack against a new base? How this is done we learn from the strategy of the ‘transference’, which we will now outline.

Let us consider the following pawn chain, arising after **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗e7 4.d4 d6 5.d5 ♘b8** (Diagram 312).

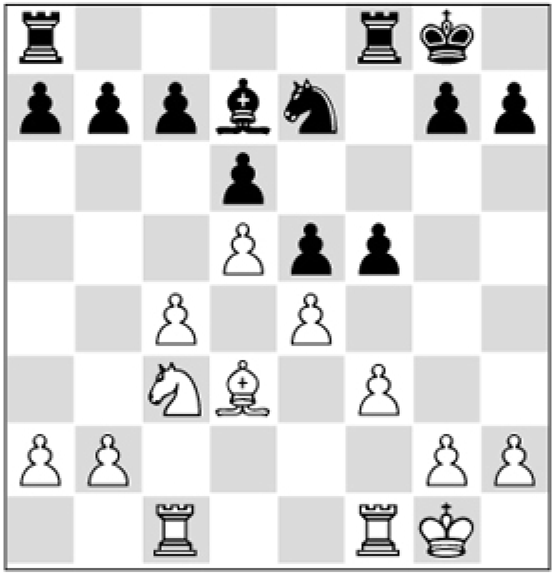
312



White now chooses the center as the theater of war and plays, say, 6.♗d3 followed by c2-c4, planning an eventual c4-c5. (He could instead have decided on an alternative piece attack, without c2-c4, against Black’s queenside, cramped as it is by the pawn on d5.) Black seeks to play …f7-f5, enabling him to shake the base of the white base at e4. The pseudo-classical school held …f7-f5 to be a refutation of d4-d5. This, however, is not the case, as I showed in my revolutionary article ‘Is Dr. Tarraschs “Die moderne Schachpartie” really a Modern Conception of the Game?’ (published in 1913). The move …f7-f5 is nothing more than a natural reaction against d4-d5 and as such is just as tolerable for White as c2-c4-c5 is for Black.

It could essentially come down to the position in Diagram 313.

313

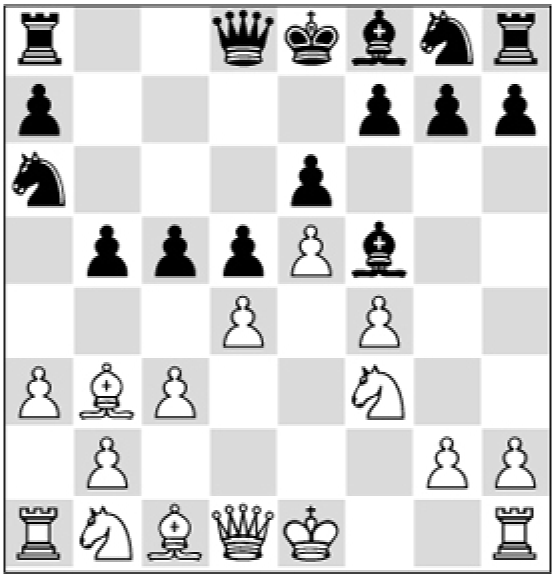


Black's attack against e4 doesn't look very promising, for on a possible …fxe4 the reply could be either fxe4 (when the base at e4 is well defended) or ♗xe4, with a good 'substitute center'. Hence Black plays …f5-f4: he thus changes the base of White's pawn chain from e4 to f3. It is true that the latter can be adequately defended (against the contemplated …g7-g5-g4xf3), but then White's kingside would appear to be under threat and, in particular, cramped. In other words: the position of the white king marks f3 as a weaker base than the pawn at e4.

And there are other circumstances that can make one base weaker than another; hence the transfer of the attack from one base to the next does not occur by chance, as Alapin and the other masters believed in the period before the publication of the essay I just mentioned. Rather, this possibility of shifting the attack signifies one more natural weapon in the fight against every pawn chain. An all-encompassing judgment on the strength of a pawn chain must go something like this: 'The base at e4 is hard to attack, while the base at f3 (after the transfer with …f5-f4), for this and that reason, is quite sensitive to attack, etc.' This is the true state of affairs with respect to the pawn chain, and is my discovery.

As this 9th chapter would otherwise stretch to too great a length, we must content ourselves with the concise suggestions given above. This transference of the attack is typical, and we could give an endless number of examples. We indicate only the following opening: **1.e4**

♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.f4 e6 5.♘f3 ♘b4 6.♗b5+ c6 7.♗a4 b5 8.a3! ♘a6 9.♗b3 c5 10.c3.


314

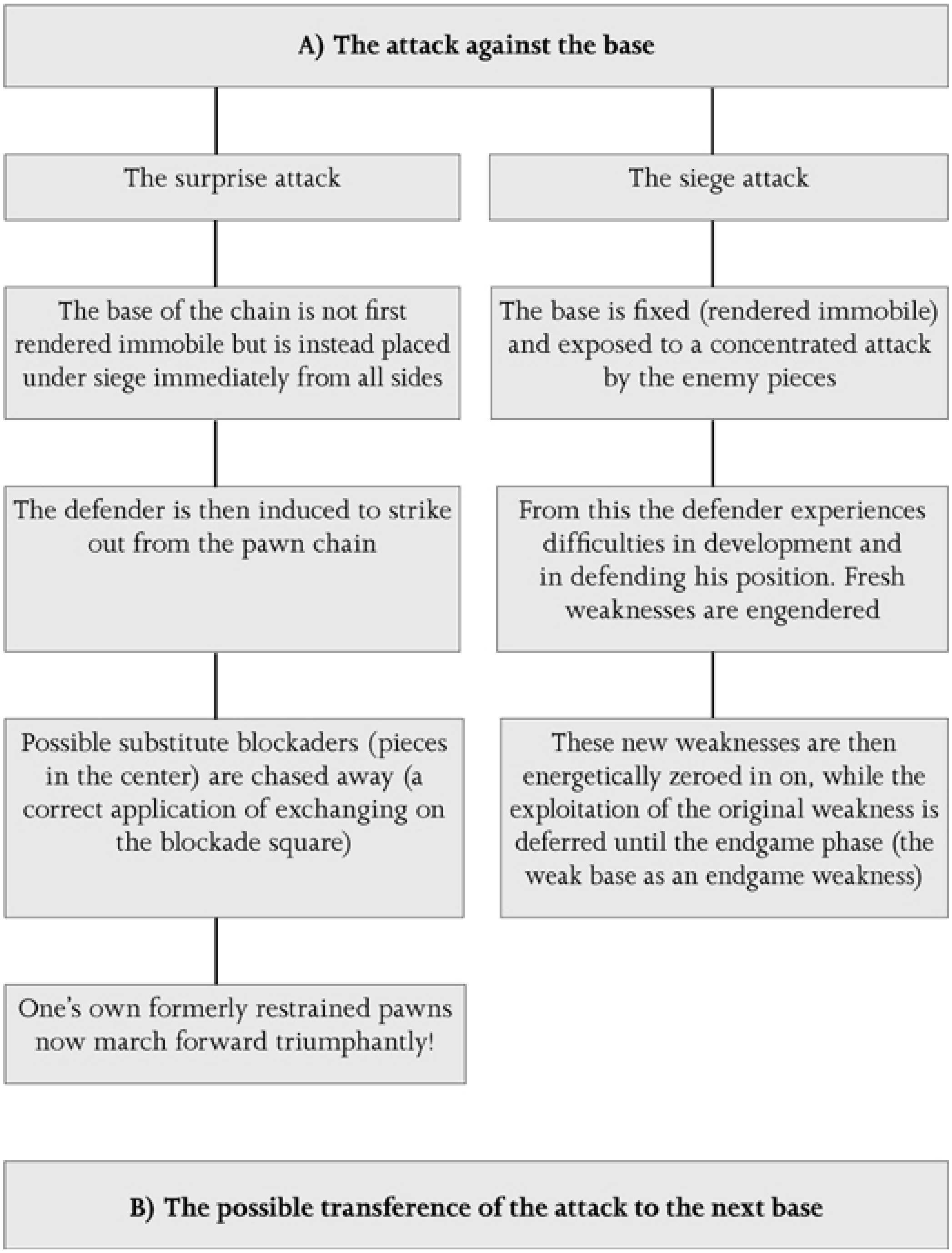
Since White’s base at d4 is thoroughly over-protected, Black plays here (with justification) **10…c4**, transferring the attack from d4 to c3. After the further moves **11.♗c2 ♗xc2 12.♕xc2 ♘e7** Black contains the white kingside, which is poised to attack, with …h7-h5 and …♘f5 (see Part II, Chapter 11, Section 3), undermining the natural advance f4-f5. Then by means of a subsequent …a7-a5 and …b5-b4, Black at some point initiates the assault against the new object of attack at c3.

Before we offer our customary schema, we should like to point out briefly how difficult it is to conduct the play in the pawn chain correctly. For soon after the formation of the chain we are confronted with the choice whether a wing or a base shall be the object of our play. Then later, on the occasion of an attack against the base, we must make the difficult decision between a surprise attack and siege warfare. And, if that is not enough, we always have to reckon with a possible transfer of the attack to the next link of the chain. When and whether this transfer is to be carried out is not always easy to judge. And furthermore, we must never forget, despite all these possibilities of attack, that we too have a vulnerable base.

A difficult chapter, but now, thanks to our deliberations, much of the inherent obscurity of the principles of the pawn chain is gone. We see that my laws concerning pawn chains arise organically from my rules about open files and play against the blockader. My sympathetic reader can find further considerations about pawn chains in the chapter on restraint and the center (Part II, Chapter 11).

A little schema for the pawn chain

The idea of the pawn chain: we can create two theaters of war: the wing which is to be attacked by pieces, or the center, which is to be attacked by means of a pawn advance (i.e., the basis)



A) The attack against the base

The surprise attack

The base of the chain is not first rendered immobile but is instead placed under siege immediately from all sides

The defender is then induced to strike out from the pawn chain

Possible substitute blockaders (pieces in the center) are chased away (a correct application of exchanging on the blockade square)

One's own formerly restrained pawns now march forward triumphantly!

The siege attack

The base is fixed (rendered immobile) and exposed to a concentrated attack by the enemy pieces

From this the defender experiences difficulties in development and in defending his position. Fresh weaknesses are engendered

These new weaknesses are then energetically zeroed in on, while the exploitation of the original weakness is deferred until the endgame phase (the weak base as an endgame weakness)

B) The possible transference of the attack to the next base

Games featuring the pawn chain

Game 17

Louis Paulsen
Siegbert Tarrasch
Played in 1888
French Defense

Illustrating the fight against a pawn chain (siege).

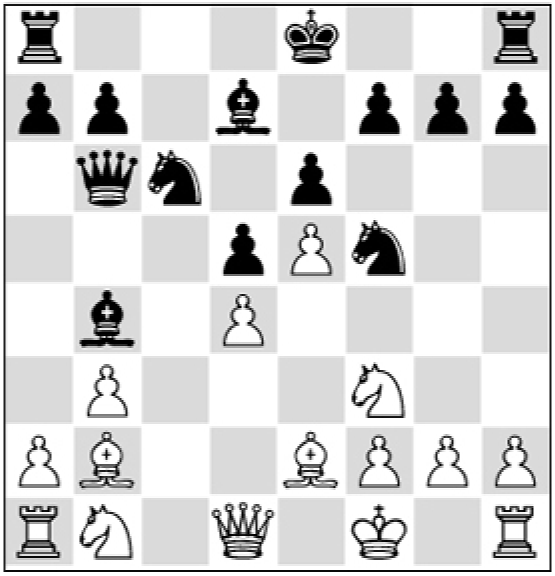
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♕b6 6.♗d3

More natural would be the development 6.♗e2, for d4 is the base, and as such should be defended as thoroughly as possible; for 6.♗e2 ‘defends’ the d-pawn more thoroughly than 6.♗d3.

6…cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗d7 8.♗e2 ♘ge7 9.b3 ♘f5 10.♗b2 ♗b4+ 11.♔f1

Forced. (See the discussion of Diagram 309.)

314a



11…♗e7

To keep up the pressure on d4 (12.g4 ♘h4!). The right idea, however, was to turn his attention instead (after 11.♔f1) to White’s ruined kingside; therefore 11…0-0! 12.g4 ♘h6 13.♖g1 f6! 14.exf6 ♖xf6 15.g5 ♖xf3! 16.♗xf3 ♘f5 17.♖g4 ♗e8 – see Diagram 310 and the attendant elaborations.

12.g3 a5?

To take advantage of the new ‘weakness’ at b3. It’s too bad that b3 is not in fact a weakness – the weakness was rather the white kingside.

13.a4 ♜c8 14.♝b5

The b5-square now provides a good support point for the white pieces.

14…♞b4

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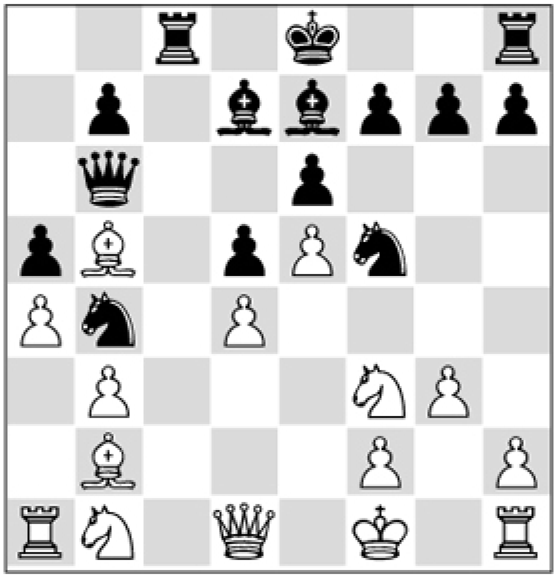

15.♝xd7+

Quite wrong. With 15.♘c3 (see the next game) White could overcome all his difficulties. For instance, 15…♗xb5+ 16.♘xb5 ♘c2 17.♖c1 ♘fe3+ 18.fxe3 ♘xe3+ 19.♔e2 ♘xd1 20.♖xc8+ ♔d7 21.♖xh8 ♘xb2 22.♖c1 and wins.

15…♚xd7 16.♞c3 ♞c6 17.♞b5 ♞a7 18.♞xa7?

White should never give up control of b5. 18.♕d3 ♘xb5 19.axb5 still should have been good enough. We see how great was the harm done by 12…a5?.

18…♛xa7 19.♛d3 ♛a6!

Now we shall see the weakened base as a weakness in the endgame.

20.♛xa6 bxa6 21.♚g2 ♜c2 22.♝c1 ♜b8 23.♜b1 ♜c3 24.♝d2 ♜cxb3 25.♜xb3 ♜xb3 26.♝xa5

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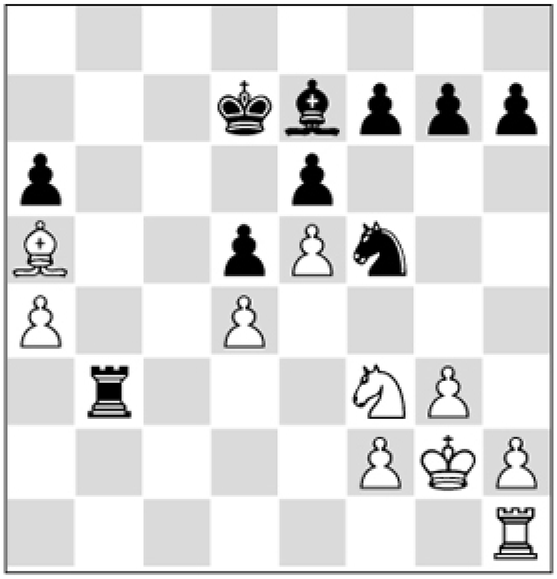

White is pleased to be rid of his weakness at b3 (on an open file!), but d4 and a4 are hard to protect.

26…♜b2!

Not 26…♖a3 because of 27.♖c1. But now the answer to 27.♖c1 would be 27…♘e3+ and …♘c4.

27.♝d2 ♝b4 28.♝f4 h6

Black can get away with this. His position can stand this minor loosening (object of attack).

29.g4 ♞e7 30.♜a1 ♞c6 31.♝c1 ♜c2 32.♝a3 ♜c4

Simpler was the immediate 32…♗xa3.

33.♝b2 ♝c3 34.♝xc3 ♜xc3 35.♜b1 ♚c7 36.g5 ♜c4

At last!

37.gxh6 gxh6 38.a5 ♜a4 39.♚g3

A final, desperate attempt to continue the ‘attack’ begun with 36.g5.

39…♜xa5

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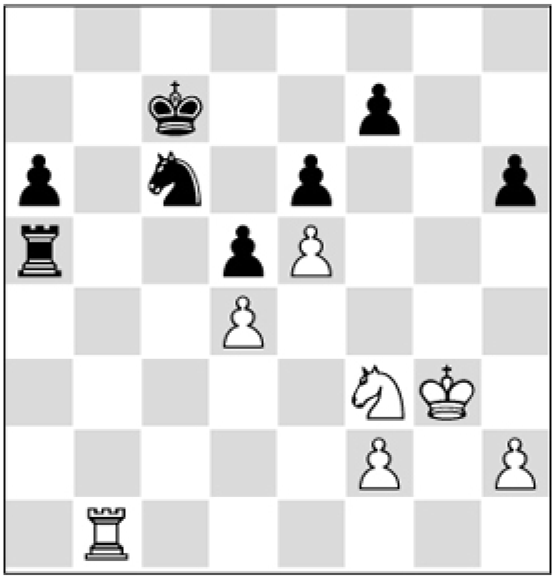

and Black won:

40.♚g4 ♜a3 41.♜d1 ♜b3 42.h4 ♞e7 43.♞e1 ♞f5 44.♞d3 a5 45.♞c5 ♜c3 46.♜b1 ♞xd4 47.♞a6+ ♚d8 48.♜b8+ ♜c8 49.♜b7 ♚e8 50.♞c7+ ♚f8 51.♞b5 ♞xb5 52.♜xb5 ♜a8 53.f4 a4 54.♜b1 a3 55.f5 a2 56.♜a1 ♜a4+ 57.♚h5 ♚g7 58.fxe6 fxe6 59.♜g1+ ♚h8 60.♜a1 ♚h7 61.♜g1 a1♛ 62.♜g7+ ♚h8

0-1

We advise the student to carefully examine this well-played ending by Dr. Tarrasch.

Game 18

Aron Nimzowitsch
Siegbert Tarrasch
San Sebastian 1912
French Defense

The first 14 moves are the same by transposition) as in the previous game:

15.♞c3 ♞a6

For 15…♗xb5+ 16.♘xb5! ♘c2; see the note to move 15 in the previous game.

16.♚g2 ♞c7 17.♝e2 ♝b4 18.♞a2 ♞a6 19.♝d3 ♞e7 20.♜c1 ♞c6 21.♞xb4 ♞axb4 22.♝b1

White has now overcome his difficulties in development; the base at d4 is protected as well as it can be and now the lance can be turned: White opens an attack against the enemy kingside that is cramped by the pawn at e5.

22…h6 23.g4

To make castling appear uncongenial. Also good, and perhaps even better, was 23.♖c3 and ♖e3.

23…♘e7 24.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 25.♘e1 ♖f8 26.♘d3 f6 27.♘xb4 ♕xb4 28.exf6 ♖xf6

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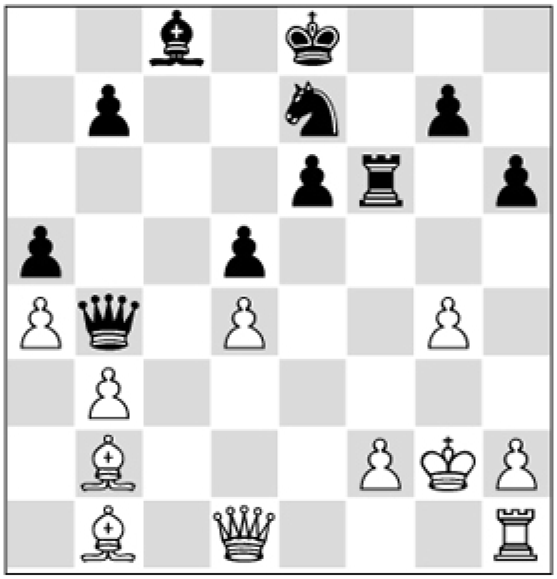
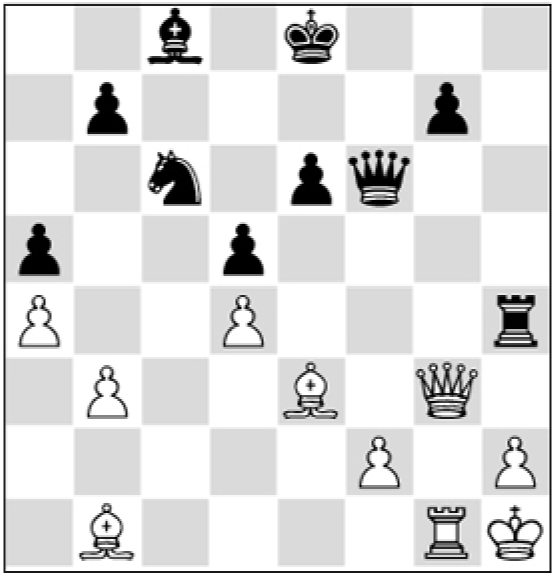


29.♗c1!

The courage associated with letting oneself be besieged for hours, only for the sake of a chance that lies far in the future, now finds its reward: White obtains a direct attack. Note the activity of the re-awakened bishop.

29…♘c6 30.g5 hxg5 31.♗xg5 ♖f8 32.♗e3 ♕e7 33.♕g4 ♕f6 34.♖g1 ♖h8 35.♔h1 ♖h4 36.♕g3

319



36…♜xd4

Desperation. White was threatening both 36.♗g5 and 36.♕xg7.

37.♝xd4 ♞xd4 38.♛xg7 ♛f3+ 39.♛g2 ♛xg2+ 40.♜xg2 ♞xb3 41.h4

Black resigned. Burn remarks on this game: ‘An excellent game on the part of Mr. Nimzowitsch, well illustrating his strategic skill. Dr. Tarrasch, himself one the greatest masters of chess strategy, is completely outplayed.’As flattering as this praise is, I have to say that it is probably not all that difficult to maneuver well if one has a complete system to fall back on. The e4-e5 advance, as I knew already even at that time, seriously cramps the black kingside. If White succeeds in holding d4 without incurring any counter-balancing disadvantages elsewhere, there must come a moment when his wheat begins to ripen, namely in the form of a piece attack against the restricted kingside or as a forceful attack on the pawn chain (with f2-f4-f5xe6, etc.).

Today, all this sounds quite reasonable, but *at the time* it was nothing short of revolutionary.

Game 19

Alberto Becker
Aron Nimzowitsch
Breslau 1925
French Defense

This game illustrates my idea of the ‘two theaters of war’ in an especially emphatic way.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘c6

The ‘odds-giving style’, as Dr. Lasker puts it. By this Lasker means that a player chooses a variation he knows to be inferior, the idea being to confront the opponent with a difficult problem. Lasker himself likes to play in this style and does so with an unmatched virtuosity. It is due to this fact that it is sometimes said that Lasker’s Achilles’ heel lies in his treatment of the openings. But such a notion rests, as we have said, on a misunderstanding.

The move 3…♘c6 originates with Alapin. In the event of e4-e5, however, the c-pawn remains blocked – a dubious dark side to Alapin’s innovation.

4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.e5 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘a5

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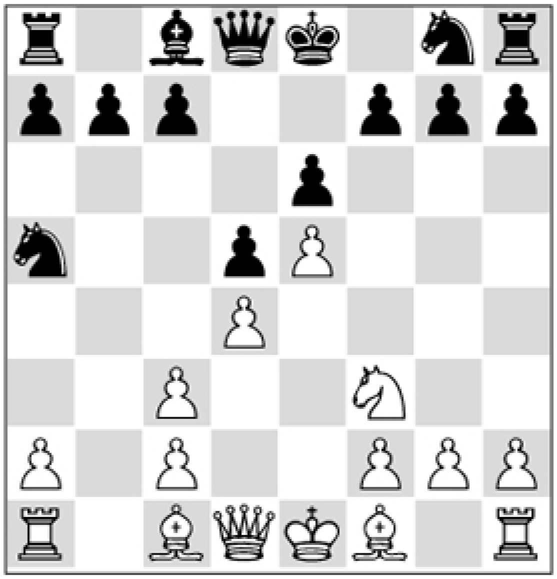

The last two moves increase the risk, for Black delays the development of his cramped kingside, where, one might argue, it is just this cramping of his game that merits special care! And yet the ‘draw-latitude’ characteristic of chess has not been overstepped; i.e., Black can still more or less equalize.

7.a4

I don’t quite understand this. Better was 7.♘d2 ♘e7 8.♕g4 (theater of war No. 1). Black would have been faced with a laborious defense following 8…♘f5 9.♗d3 ♖g8 10.♕h3 h6.

7…♘e7 8.♗d3 b6

Preparing the attack with …c7-c5 against the base at d4.

9.♘d2! c5 10.♕g4

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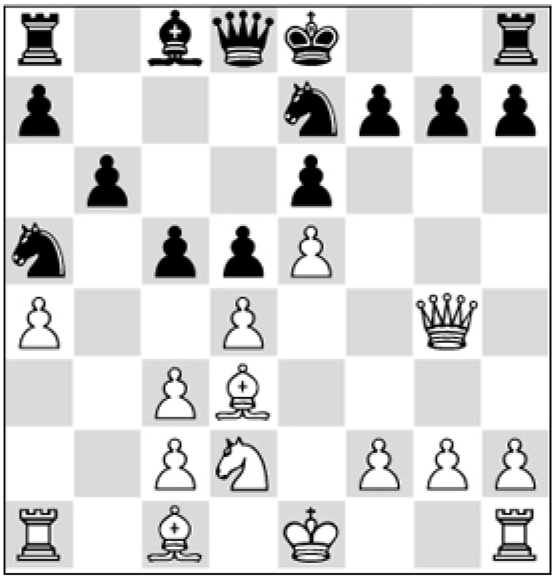

How is Black to defend his g-pawn?

10…c4!

He doesn’t protect it at all! For any direct defense here would compromise his game.

11.♗e2

11.♕xg7? ♖g8 and …cxd3.

11…♘f5

The g-pawn is defended, but the pressure on d4 has been lifted and White now has a free hand to play on the right side of the board.

12.♘f3 h6

To be able to maintain the knight at its fine position on f5. White’s threat was ♗g5 ♕(any); ♘h4. But Lasker rightly prefers the elastic defense 12…♘c6 followed by 13…f6 after 13.♗g5. An interesting line would be 12…♘c6 13.a5!? ♘xa5 14.♗g5 f6! 15.fxe6 gxf6 16.♗h4. Now 16…♘xh4 would fail to 17.♕g7!, but 16…♕e7 would appear to consolidate his game sufficiently.

13.♕h3

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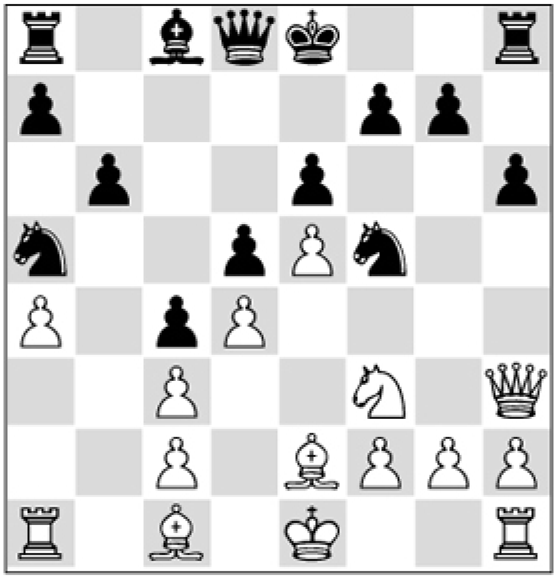

How can Black prevent the ensuing elegant breakthrough threat? Namely, the threat 14.g4 ♘e7 15.g5 h5 16.g6! ♘xg6 17.♘g5 and ♖g1.

13…♚d7

I rather like taking my king for a stroll.

14.g4 ♞e7 15.♞d2

Threatening 16.♕f3 followed by ♕xf7 or ♘xc4!.

15…♛e8

The queen now occupies the throne vacated by the king! Moreover, she has her eye on the a4-pawn, to which she has taken a liking.

16.f4

The scene shifts! The old theater of war vanishes in a flash and new plans of attack appear. White aims to attack the base of the chain with f4-f5.

16…♚c7

The king continues on his stroll.

17.♝a3 ♝d7 18.♛f3 h5!

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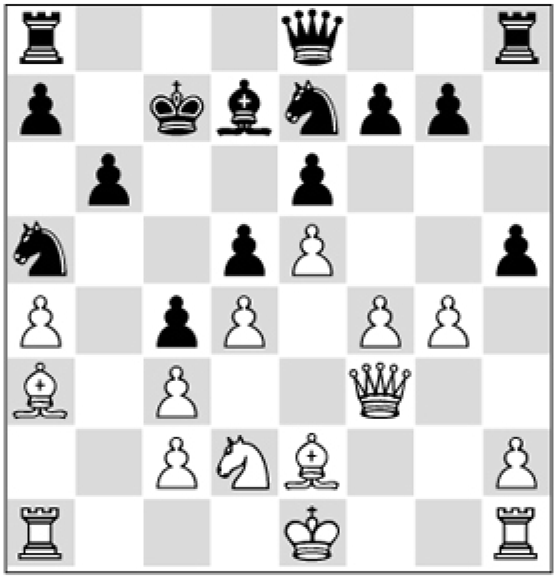

The white kingside comprises a fearsome instrument of attack; Black’s last move seeks to incapacitate it. Insufficient, however, would have been 18…♗c6 (to parry the other threat, ♘xc4!), e.g., 19.f5 and f5-f6, when the wedge would have been unendurable.

19.♞xc4!

If 19.gxh5, then 19…♘f5, crippling the white kingside that was all ready to march. If, however, 19.h3, then 19…hxg4 20.hxg4 ♖xh1+ 21.♕xh1 ♕h8, keeping White busy.

19…♞xc4 20.♝xc4 hxg4

Of course, not 20…dxc4?? because of 21.♗d6+ and ♕xa8.

21.♛g2 ♞f5 22.♝d3

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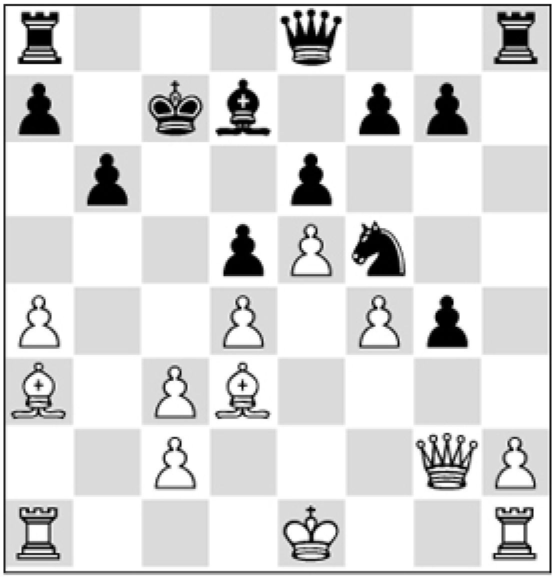

22…♝xa4!!

Brunch in a dangerous situation.

23.♝xf5 exf5 24.♛xd5

24.c4 would also be difficult to counter. The parry would consist in 24…♕c6 25.♕xd5 (not 25.cxd5 on account of 25…♕c3+) 25…♕xd5! 26.cxd5 ♗b5!!, for then the establishment of the bishop at d5 (via c4) could not be prevented.

24…♝c6

Black’s king position is threatened from several directions, but the situation is not hopeless.

25.♛d6+ ♚c8

With an eye to the combination planned; possible, too, was 25…♔b7 26.d5 ♗b5.

26.d5 ♜h6 27.e6

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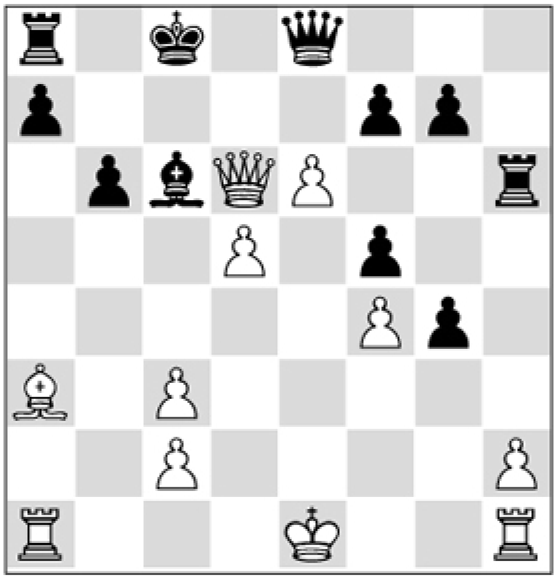

27…♝xd5!

After the game this move was declared the ‘only move’. And rightly so. It is true Black had another course available to him, that is, 27…♖xe6+ 28.dxe6 ♗xh1 29.0-0-0 ♗f3! (not 29…♗e4 because of 30.e7 and ♕e5!, when the white queen obtains new squares, with decisive effect) 30.exf7 ♕xf7 31.♕d8+ ♔b7 32.♖d7+ ♔a6, when he is safe. A position that is healthy has at least two ‘only’ moves.

28.♛xd5 ♛xe6+ 29.♛xe6+ ♜xe6+

White now enjoys the advantage of an extra piece, but his other troops look like war cripples – no wonder, after such a struggle! Under the circumstances the white king does not know where to go: to the left, so weep for the f4-pawn. If he heads right, shed heart-wrenching tears for the pawns on c2 and c3.

30.♚d2 ♚b7 31.♜ae1 ♜h8 32.♜xe6! fxe6 33.♜e1! ♜xh2+ 34.♚d3 g3

Anything but a passive rook position! (34…♖h6?)

35.♜g1

After 35.♖xe6 g5! 36.fxg5 g2 the g5-pawn would have been obstructive.

35…♜h3!

Much better than 35…g2, for, as we shall see, it is important to have a clear view all the way to c2.

36.♚d4 ♚c6 37.♜g2 a5 38.c4 ♜h2! 39.♜xg3 ♜xc2

Cf. the previous note.

40.♜xg7 ♜e2 41.♝c1 ♜e4+ 42.♚d3 b5 43.cxb5+ ♚xb5

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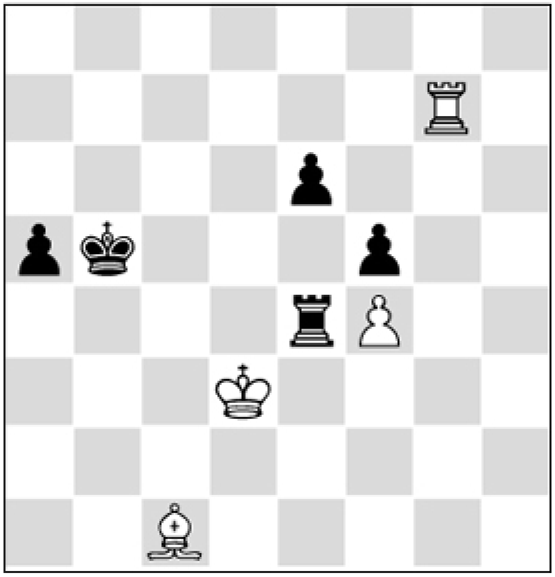

Despite his fine play, centralization, and an extra piece, White cannot win! Black’s piece sacrifice was therefore correct.

44.♝e3 ♚c6 45.♜f7 a4 46.♜f8 a3 47.♜a8 e5 48.♜a6+ ♚b5 49.♜b6+

Prof. Becker wants nothing but to win, and so he ends up losing.

49…♚a5 50.♜f6 a2 51.♝d2+ ♚b5 52.♝c3 ♜d4+

After six hours of hard struggle it is hardly a delight to get such a problem check!

53.♚e2?

Correct was 53.♔c2 ♖c4 54.♔b2 ♖xc3 55.♖xf5.

53…♜xf4 54.♜f8 ♚c4 55.♝a1 ♜e4+ 56.♚d2 f4

Now White may be said to be lost.

57.♜c8+ ♚d5 58.♜d8+ ♚e6 59.♜e8+ ♚f5 60.♜g8 f3

0-1

Game 20

Karel Opocensky
Aron Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925
Nimzo-Indian Defense

This game shows where and how an advance on the *wrong* wing is to be punished.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 b6 5.e4 ♗b7

The lust to expand on the part of the white center pawns here proves to be less than one might imagine at first glance.

6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♘f3 ♗e7!

By this unexpected retreat, which threatens …♘b4, Black succeeds in muzzling the enemy central pawn mass while at the same time keeping his valuable king’s bishop.

8.a3 d6 9.0-0 e5 10.d5

The muzzling.

10…♘b8 11.b4 ♘bd7

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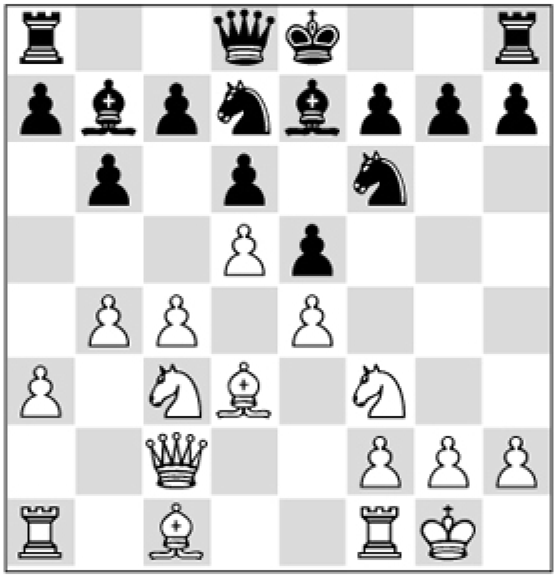

12.♗b2

The pawn chain e4, d5/e5, d6 calls for c4-c5 (after sufficient preparation). For of the two theaters of war resulting from d4-d5 (see our remarks in Section 1) only one can be made use of, namely the attack on the base at d6. The other theoretically possible attacking plan, namely the march by pieces against the queenside hemmed in by the d5-pawn, must be regarded as nipped in the bud by the presence of an obstruction on c4.

However, the one plan of attack appropriate here (c4-c5) could have been prepared by 12.h3 and 13.♗e3; e.g., 12…h6! (still the best chance) 13.♗e3 g5 14.♘h2. Black will try to lay siege to the white kingside, but White’s attack (♘a4 and c4-c5) is quickly put into effect, while his own king position can be defended. Accordingly, 12.h3 and 13.♗e3 was the right continuation.

12…0-0 13.♘e2

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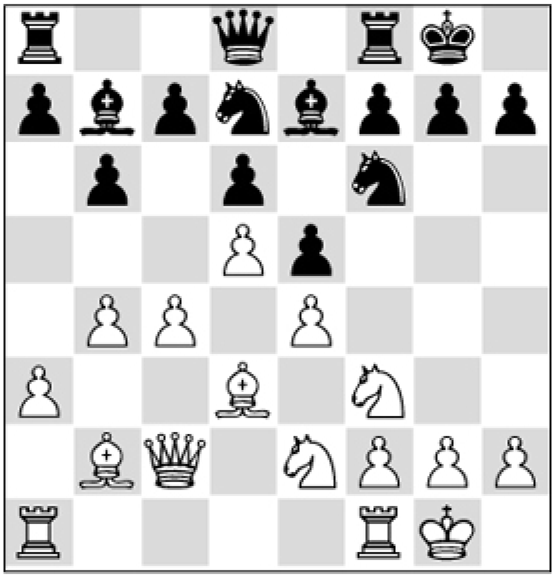

The white pieces depart the queenside to migrate to the other wing. By these travels, however, the cramping effect of his own center is diminished. For with the knight still placed on c3, …c7-c6 could be answered with dxc6, and the knight would also fix the d5-square as a post from which it can carry out threats. If, however, the knight has quit c3, the …c7-c6 thrust gains in force. It is true that this advance is not a threat at present, for Black is the weaker party on the queenside, but in time he will get to this move. The way in which this theater of war, disdained by White, is made a base of operations by his opponent makes this game of fundamental interest to the student.

13…♘h5 14.♕d2

On 14.g4, 14…♘hf6 would follow. Black wants to be attacked on the kingside, as he thinks this theater of war cannot be made use of in this case (for White’s play, as pointed out, lies on the queenside).

14…g6 15.g4 ♘g7 16.♘g3 c6!

What sense can there be in this move?

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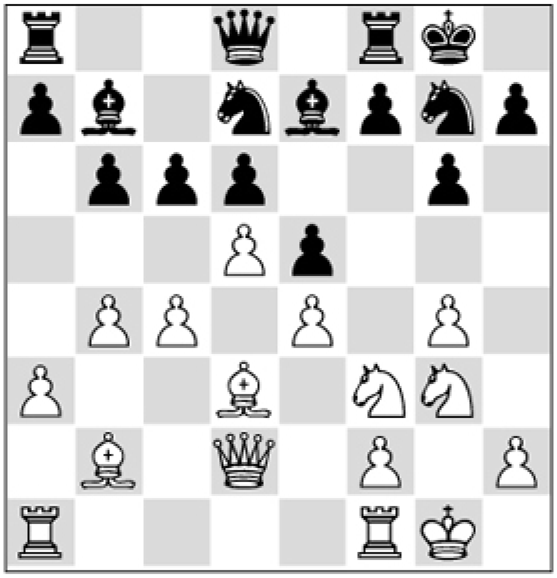

If …c6xd5 is played at some point, then after the reply cxd5 this would achieve nothing more than the exposure of his own base at d6. Black in this case would have worked on behalf of his opponent, for (let us imagine the black pawn still on c7) the strategic advance indicated for White, c4-c5xd6, would lead to the very same pawn configuration, and this is desirable for White!

But this calculation involves two logical errors. Firstly, the white advance c4-c5 will certainly not content itself with cxd6 alone; this is in fact only one threat. The insertion of a wedge (in other words the transference of the attack) with c5-c6 would be a much sharper alternate threat. Secondly, White, with ♗b2 and ♘e2-g3, has been untrue to his queen’s wing; the just punishment will come in Black becoming strong there!

17.♕h6 ♖c8 18.♖ac1

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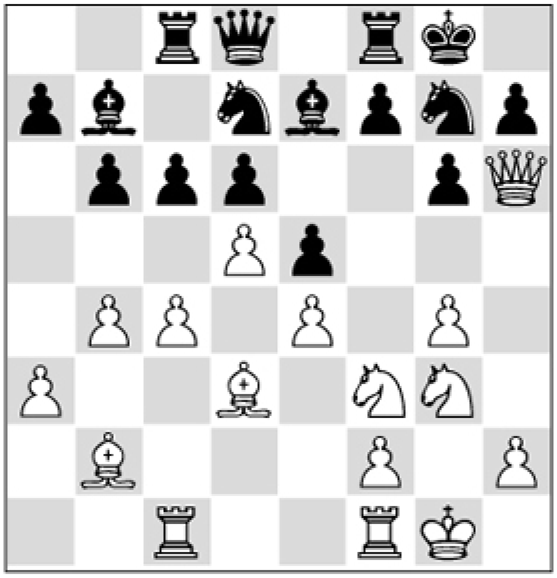

18…a6!!

A very difficult move. On 18…cxd5 White could play 19.exd5. It is true that Black would get two powerful pawns with 19…f5 20.gxf5 gxf5, but after 21.♔h1 and ♖g1 Black would stand badly: the mobility of his e- and f-pawns would in fact prove illusory, while White’s kingside attack would be quite real. Black intends …c6xd5 at a moment where e4xd5 is unfeasible.

19.♜fd1 ♜c7 20.h4? cxd5! 21.cxd5

Since 20.h4 has further weakened White’s position (the g4-square), 20…cxd5 is clearly the right move. On 21.exd5, instead of the text, 21…♘f6 would follow, as in the game. And the threat of a breakthrough with …b6-b5 would be in the air.

21…♜xc1 22.♜xc1 ♞f6 23.♞h2 ♚h8

The white queen is flirting with danger; e.g., 24.f4? ♘g8. If 23.♘g5, then 23…♕d7! 24.f3 ♖c8, when the queen is menaced by the threat 25…♗f8.

24.♛e3 ♞d7 25.♞f3 ♞f6 26.♞h2 ♞g8 27.g5 f6

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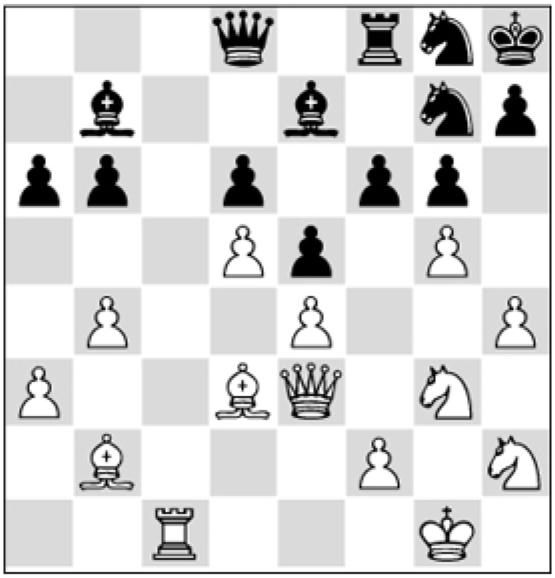

The powerful kingside attack instigated by this move is to be understood in ‘historical’ terms – as it were, as a secondary attack. For with …c7-c6 Black had already come to grips with his opponent; and because White felt this grip he felt induced to hurry up his attack (with h2-h4). This acceleration created new weaknesses in his own kingside formation. Hence the attack with …f7-f6 could be regarded as the logical consequence of the …c7-c6 attack.

28.♘f3 fxg5 29.hxg5 ♗c8 30.♖c6

A clever and spirited attempt to save himself, and one that is extraordinarily difficult to counter. We note in passing that in the position arrived at it looks as though White had been operating exclusively on the queenside all along (with c2-c4-c5xd6, after which …c7xd6 followed), while Black had sought his salvation in a counter-attack directed against the base of the white pawn chain at e4…

Benevolent Mother Nature! It is not like her to be so unforgiving as to hold every error against its player. Quite often she shuts her eyes. And sometimes, with a smile, she even intervenes and seeks to re-establish an equilibrium.

An example: for many generations now the Chinese have taken to crippling their children’s feet, yet the young Chinese always emerge into the world with normal feet. A further example: it has always been the case that Europeans have been trained as capable businessmen,

journalists, diplomats, and even chess journalists; and yet young Europeans always come into the world as truth-loving little citizens.
In the game before us, White chose the wrong side of the board as his theater of war, but after some further moves it all of a sudden looks as though he had operated on the appropriate wing. His game is lost nonetheless, but the inclination on the part of Nature to try to re-establish equilibrium is unmistakable here.

30…♝d7 31.♝xa6

On 31.♖xb6 there follows 31…♖xf3. The sacrifice of the exchange is very promising.

31…♝xc6 32.dxc6 ♛c7 33.b5

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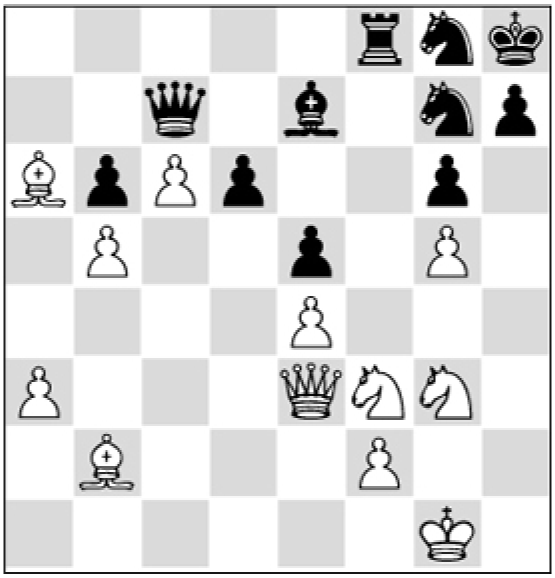

33…h6!

This pawn offer gives Black room to maneuver; otherwise, sacrifices at d6 or e5 would have been possible. Note, for instance, the following variation: 33…♘e6 (instead of the text move) 34.a4 ♗d8 35.♗a3 ♕f7 36.♗xd6! ♕xf3 37.♗xe5+ ♘g7 38.♕xf3 and 39.c7.

34.gxh6 ♞e6 35.a4 ♝d8 36.♝a3 ♛f7

For now 37.♗xd6 ♕xf3 38.♗xe5+ would be answered simply by 38…♔h7.

37.♞xe5 dxe5 38.♝xf8 ♛xf8 39.a5 ♞xh6

Black has 33…h6! to thank for the possibility of this intervention as well!

40.axb6 ♘g4 41.c7 ♘xe3 42.c8♕ ♕f3 43.fxe3 ♕xg3+

White resigned. Black will take the e-pawn with check and then the b-pawn also.

Game 21

Akiba Rubinstein
Oldrich Duras
Karlsbad 1911
English Opening

As we know, the philosophy of the pawn chain, in our treatment of it, can provide us with a good criterion for judging the condition of a pawn chain at any moment.

As the previous game demonstrates, however, this theory of the chain can shed light on the state of the pawn chain in the adjacent theater of war as well. We are therefore speaking of a criterion that has been expanded. It is necessary in this connection, certainly, that we take pains to proceed from the chain as our premise.

We recommend that the student seek to understand the two different theaters of war, that is, the chain as such on the one hand and the far queenside on the other, in their logical connection. In the following game this is possible without any great difficulty.

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 ♗b4 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♘f3 ♖e8 6.0-0 ♘c6

The exchange on c3 could also be considered.

7.♘d5 ♗f8 8.d3 h6 9.b3 d6 10.♗b2 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘e7 12.e4 c5

In the long run something must be done for the c-pawn.

13.dxc6 ♘xc6 14.d4 ♗g4 15.d5 ♘e7

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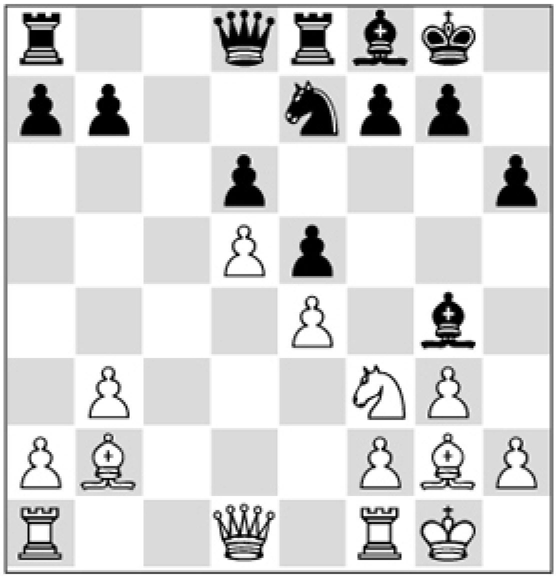

Now the pawn chain e4, d5, e5, and d6 has been formed; the black base of the chain at d6 already seems exposed (from the side), just as if the typical attack c2-c4-c5xd6 had occurred.

16.♕d3 ♕d7 17.♘d2

Already the knight is being sent ahead to attack the exposed base.

17…♗h3 18.a4

To secure the position of the knight at c4.

18…♗xg2 19.♔xg2 ♖eb8 20.♘c4 b5 21.axb5 ♕xb5 22.♖a3

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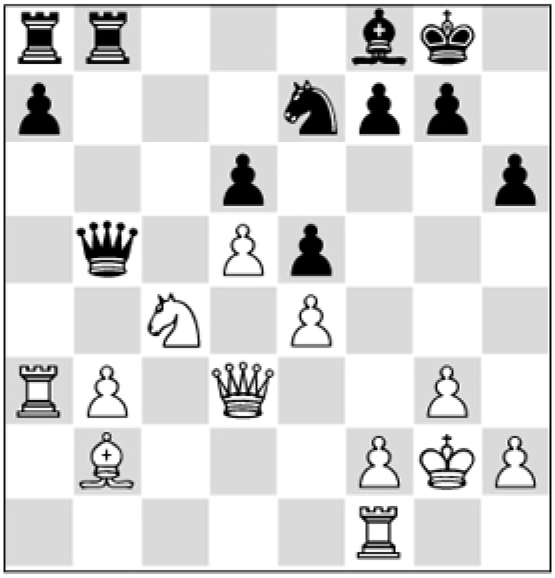

In such and similar situations, the question arises: which pawn is the weaker, the a-pawn or the b-pawn? Here, the problem could be solved by the path of logical deduction: since d6 is weaker than d5, the same relation must obtain over the rest of the queenside. If this were not the case, 18.a4 must have been wrong, and this is unlikely.

Was White in fact unjustified in supporting his own important knight on c4? That would be absurd. No, 20.♘c4 was indicated, and 18.a4 just as much so, so 20…b5 must have led to a less favorable position for Black. The course of the game confirms the validity of these deliberations.

22…♘g6

Perhaps 22…♘c8 would have been better.

23.♖fa1 a6 24.♗c1 ♖b7 25.♗e3 f6 26.f3

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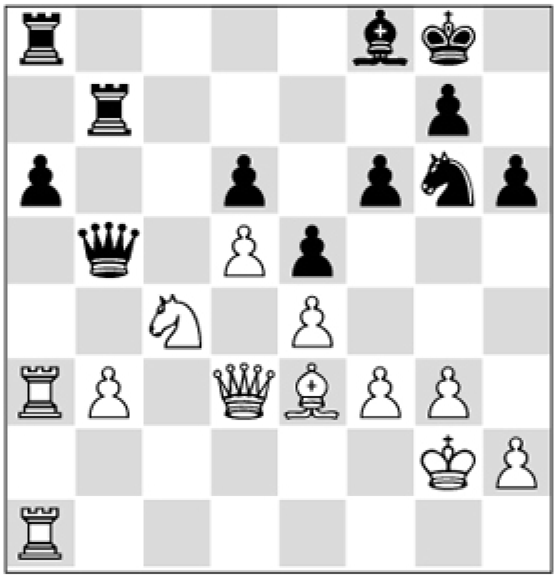

If Black could get in …f6-f5, his game would not be so bad. But the move …f7-f5 is out of the question here and Black is now besieged.

26…♘e7 27.♕f1

Threatening 28.♘xd6.

27…♘c8 28.♘d2 ♕b4 29.♕c4 ♕xc4 30.♘xc4 ♖ab8 31.♘d2 ♖c7 32.♖xa6

Note the masterly and versatile use made of the points d2 and c4.

32…♖c2 33.♖6a2 ♖xa2 34.♖xa2

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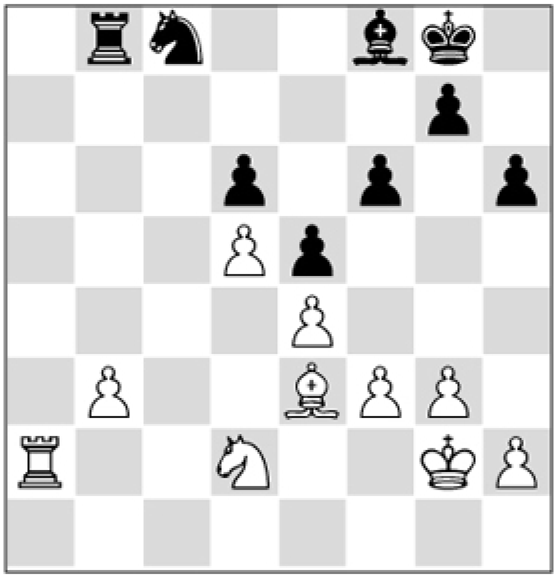

The rest of the game, a matter of centralizing the white king and a subsequent advance in close order of the pawn, knight, and king, is readily intelligible.

34…♝e7 35.♚f2 ♚f7 36.♚e2 ♚e8 37.♚d3 ♚d7 38.♚c3 ♝d8 39.♞c4

The c3-square is our shelter, the c4-knight our bridge builder.

39…♝c7 40.g4 ♝d8 41.♜a6 ♝c7 42.h4 ♝d8 43.h5 ♝c7 44.b4 ♜b7 45.♜a8 ♚d8 46.♚b3 ♜b8 47.♜xb8 ♝xb8 48.b5 ♞e7 49.b6 f5

There is nothing left to hope for.

50.gxf5 ♞g8 51.♝f2 ♚c8 52.♝h4

Black resigned

The next game furnishes an example of transference, carried out in classic style.

Game 22

Geza Maroczy
Hugo Süchting
Barmen 1905
Queen’s Gambit Declined

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♝g5 ♞bd7 5.e3 ♝e7 6.♞f3 0-0 7.♛c2 c6 8.a3 ♞h5

Hardly appropriate here; better was 8…♖e8 or 8…h6.

9.h4 f5

On 9…f6, 10.♗d3 would follow.

10.♗e2 ♘df6 11.♘e5! ♗d7 12.♕d1 ♗e8 13.c5

Forming the chain.

13…♕c7 14.b4 a5 15.g3!

Maroczy understands, as few do, how to prevent freeing moves (here, …f5-f4).

15…axb4 16.axb4 ♖xa1 17.♕xa1 ♘e4 18.g4! ♘xc3 19.♕xc3 ♘f6 20.♗f4!

Threatening 21.♘g6 and thus gaining time for g4-g5.

20…♕c8 21.g5 ♘d7 22.♘d3!

Exchanging would make the break-through more difficult.

22…♗f7 23.♔d2 ♗d8 24.♖a1

Only now does play begin in the real theater. The idea is of course an attack on the base at c6 by b4-b5.

24…♗c7 25.♖a7 ♖e8 26.♗xc7 ♕xc7 27.f4

Preventing all attempts at breakthrough with …e6-e5.

27…♖b8 28.b5

Finally!

28…♕c8

Or 28…cxb5 29.♘b4, etc.

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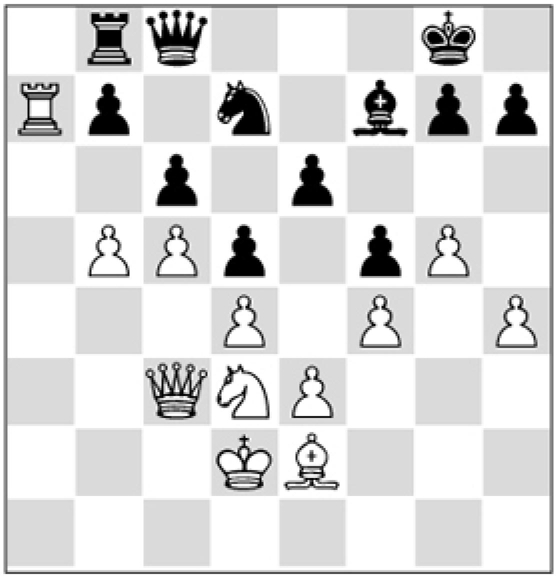

29.b6

With this move White transfers the attack to the new base at a7. The play against c6 could have been pursued with 29.♘b4 followed perhaps by ♕c3-a3-a4. But the transfer to b7 is even stronger and, above all, safer. Süchting is now paralysed.

29…♝e8 30.♞c1 ♞f8 31.♞b3 e5!

The only salvation for the b7-pawn, otherwise 32.♘a5, 33.♘xb7, and if 33…♖xb7, then 34.♗a6.

32.dxe5 ♞e6 33.♝d3 g6 34.h5 ♝f7 35.♞a5 ♞d8 36.e6!

Our sacrificing advance of the unblockaded passed pawn. The pieces to the rear come to life (see Chapter 4, Section 2a).

36…♛xe6 37.h6 d4 38.♛xd4 ♛a2+

and White won:

39.♚e1 ♞e6 40.♛e5 ♜e8 41.♞xb7 ♛b3 42.♝e2 ♛b1+ 43.♚f2 ♛h1 44.♞d6 ♛h4+ 45.♚g2 ♞xf4+ 46.♛xf4 ♝d5+ 47.♝f3 ♝xf3+ 48.♚xf3

Black resigned.

With this game we conclude our treatment of the elements in chess.

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Part II – Positional Play

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Chapter 10

Prophylaxis and the Center

Provides an introduction to my concept of positional play and further treats the problem of the center

1. The reciprocal relations between the treatment of the elements and positional play

As my kindly reader will soon see, my concept of positional play is based for the greater part on the knowledge we have so laboriously wrung from our examination of the ‘elements’. This is especially true of the stratagems of restraint and centralization that we have outlined.

This connection between the elements has the pleasing effect of ensuring that our work has a certain unity of structure, which naturally can only be of benefit to the reader. But this reader should not indulge in the expectation that penetrating into the spirit of positional play cannot cause him any further difficulties worth mentioning – in this he would be in error. For in the first place, positional play involves many other ideas as well, for example my discovery of the law of overprotection or the very difficult strategy of the center. Secondly, precisely the *transference* of the ideas we have learned from the ‘elements’ onto new terrain, that of positional play, is difficult enough. The sort of difficulty faced here is much the same as that faced by a composer who wishes to adapt the score of a violin sonata for a full orchestra. However much the ‘theme’ may remain the same, the ‘*whole*’ gains significantly in breadth and depth.

Let us explain this with a concrete case in chess, for example ‘restraint’. In the ‘elements’, restraint touches on only a comparatively small part of the game; a passed pawn is restrained, or a liberated enemy pawn chain is impeded in its advance. In positional play, on the other hand, the motif of restraint makes a much more substantial appearance; now it is often a whole wing that is to be restrained. In games in which the player who is restraining his opponent is ‘scoring’ with particular vigor – I am thinking of my game vs. Johner at Dresden, 1926, Game 30 – we really experience the whole board, both wings, every corner picking up the theme and blaring it in all directions!

Even worse for the student is the second case. Here the theme appears in an epic breadth, with a series of seemingly purposeless moves, to and fro, colorfully intertwined. This maneuvering play corresponds in a way to accompaniment in a musical piece. Many regard both of them, maneuvering and accompaniment, as superfluous and dispensable. Many chess friends even go so far as to speak of this moving to and fro as a product of decadence. In reality, however, this process of tacking often enough provides the strategic – let it be understood, a strategic and not merely psychological – method of throwing onto the scale a slight advantage in terrain and with it an ability to move our troops more quickly from one wing to the other.

2. On positional thought-vermin, whose eradication in each particular case is a conditio sine qua non for learning positional play

Namely, (a) the obsession for activity, typical of the amateur player, and (b) the master player’s overestimation of the accumulation of slight advantages.

There are in fact a number of amateurs to whom positional play does not seem to come naturally at all. Twenty years of experience in teaching chess has, however, convinced me that this malady can easily be extirpated, since in the overwhelming number of cases it is a matter of nothing more than a *psychologically wrong-headed attitude* on the part of the players concerned. I maintain that there is nothing mysterious about position play as such, that every single amateur who has studied my ‘elements’ (in the first nine chapters) must find it a simple matter to penetrate into the spirit of this style of play. He need only (1) root out any *weeds* proliferating in him (that is to say, any mental vermin), and (2) execute the precepts laid down in the discussions that follow.

A typical and very widespread mental pest is the assumption on the part of many amateurs that each move must achieve something in a direct way. Hence, such chess friends seek out only those moves that involve a direct threat or which parry a threat; all other possible moves, such as waiting moves or moves that put his position right, are completely disregarded. We state here most emphatically that it is entirely wrong to let oneself be guided by such notions.

Positional moves are for the most part neither threatening nor defensive but rather are moves that simply make our position secure in a *higher sense*, and for this purpose it is necessary to bring our pieces into contact with strategically important points, either those in the possession of the enemy or our own. (See the discussions below on the ‘fight against our opponent’s freeing moves’ and ‘over-protection’.)

When a positional player, that is to say, a player who knows how to safeguard his position in a higher sense, engages an opponent who is a purely combinational player, there is not infrequently that moment of surprise: the combination player, who is attacking furiously, has braced himself for one of two kinds of counter-stroke; either he looks for a defensive measure from his opponent, or he reckons on the possibility of a counter-attack. And now the positional player confounds him by selecting a move that does not fit into either of these categories; the move in some way or other brings his pieces into contact with a key point, and this turns out to have a miraculous effect – his position is reorganized and the opponent’s attack comes to naught.

A similar discomfiting effect is often produced by a move that protects a point that is not subject to any attack. The positional player protects a point not merely to cover that point but also because he knows that the piece offering the protection, by its contact with the point, must gain in strength. This will be discussed further under ‘Over-Protection’.

And now, by way of illustration I will show you a game that demonstrates in life size the wrong-headed psychological attitude that I have just outlined. I had the white pieces against a quite well-known amateur who was by no means a weak player, who, however, was under the impression that a proper chess game should take a course such as the following: ‘One side castles kingside, the other queenside, violent pawn storms are unleashed against the respective castled positions, and whoever comes first wins!'

We shall see how, and especially by what, this amateurish idea was reduced ad absurdum.

Nimzowitsch-N.N., Riga 1910

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 d6 This move is completely playable, but only in conjunction with a firm defensive structure attainable by, say, …♘f6, …♗e7, …0-0, …♖e8, with pressure against the e4-pawn. **5.♘c3 ♞f6 6.♗e2 ♝e7 7.♗e3 ♝d7 8.♕d2 a6? 9.f3 0-0 10.0-0-0 b5** The attack seems hardly appropriate here, so that my opponent's figure of speech – 'Now we can get going!' –, expressing his true lust for battle, struck me as all the more cute. (See Diagram 338).

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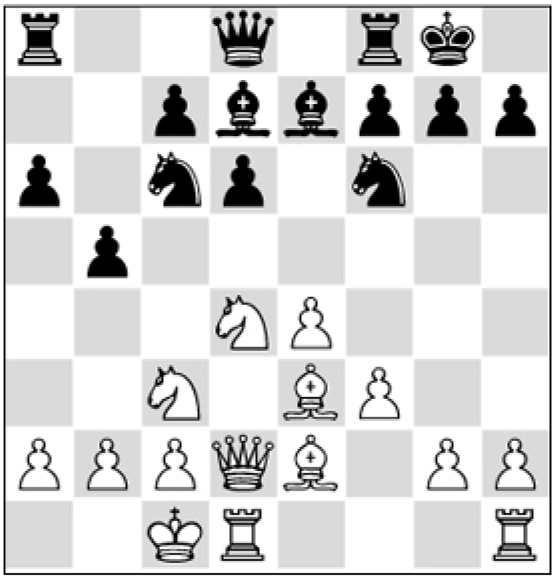

The attacking try …b7-b5? is to be refuted by a positional move. Which one?

I understood him at once – he clearly expected me to reply 11.g4, with an exciting race between the pawns on both sides according to the maxim, 'Who comes first?'.

White now played **11.♘d5**. With this move, occupying the forward outpost on the d-file, White fulfils a second requirement of the positional style of play, namely, that premature enemy flank attacks are to be punished by play in the center (either a breakthrough or occupation of the center). There followed **11…♞xd5 12.exd5 ♞xd4 13.♝xd4**, when White is significantly better placed. He has a centralized position that cannot be taken away from him after **13…♝f6 14.f4 ♜e8 15.♝f3** followed by ♖he1. Moreover, Black has a shattered queenside that reveals very bad endgame weaknesses. 11.♘d5 was a positional move. The psychological attitude displayed by Black we have already discussed.

Moral of the story: do not always be thinking of attack! Safeguarding moves (in the higher sense), indicated by the demands made on us by the position, are much more to be recommended.

Another erroneous conception is encountered among master-level players. Many of these players, together with a number of strong amateurs, think that the most important aspect of positional play is the accumulation of small advantages for exploitation in the endgame. This way of playing would demand the subtlest intelligence and would be the most satisfying, and aesthetic, way of playing.

In contradiction to this we should like to note that the accumulation of small advantages is by no means the most important component of position play. We are inclined rather to assign to this plan of operation a fairly subordinate role. Furthermore, the difficulty of this method of playing is very much overestimated, and, lastly, it is not altogether easy to see why the petty storing-up of values is to be considered ‘aesthetic’. Does not this activity remind us somewhat of an old miser, and who would care to call such a person beautiful? And with that we note that there are quite other things that the position player needs to turn his attention to, things that place this ‘accumulation’ quite in the shade.

What are these things, and in what do I see the idea of real position play? The answer is concise and to the point: *prophylaxis*!

3. My innovative concept of positional play as such: the familiar accumulation of small advantages is of only secondary (or tertiary) importance. Much more significant is a prophylactic that operates from both the inside and the outside. My innovative principle of ‘over-protection’, its definition and meaning.

As mentioned several times already, neither attack nor defense is, in my view, a matter that really pertains to positional play, which is in fact an energetic and purposeful application of prophylaxis. What this prophylactic method is concerned with more than anything else is the a priori blunting of possibilities that, positionally, might be undesirable for us. Of such possibilities, apart from the mishaps that are likely to afflict less-experienced players, there are *two kinds* only. (We recall in passing that the beginner must take care, in particular, not to lose his center pawns, since such a lack of a central pawn can encourage his opponent to roll his pawns forward in the center like an avalanche. The experienced player, in contrast to the neophyte, would find the ways and means to restrain this avalanche.) The first is the possibility of one's opponent making a 'freeing' pawn move. The positional player must therefore place his pieces in such a way as to prevent this freeing move. In this connection it should be said, however, that in the individual case we have to examine whether the 'freeing' move in question really is freeing. As I showed in my revolutionary article, 'Is Dr. Tarrasch's "Die Moderne Schachpartie" Really a Modern Conception of the Game?' (see Appendix One), the maxim 'All that glitters is not gold' applies in fact to the effort to free oneself. Many a freeing move merely leads to an unfavorable, premature opening of the game, while other freeing moves are to be seen as normal reactions and as such should be calmly accepted. For it would be presumptuous and foolhardy to contend against natural phenomena.

In spite of the fact that we will examine freeing moves under 'Restraint' later on, we shall nevertheless give two examples here. An example of a mistaken freeing move is shown in Diagram 339.

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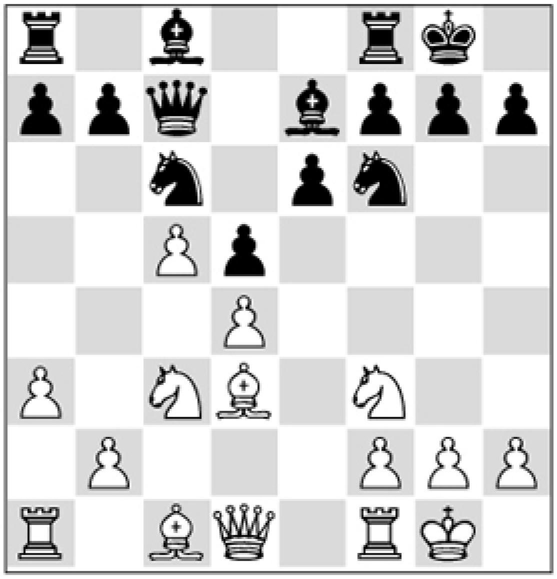

In playing b2-b4, White permits his opponent the freeing advance …e6-e5. Was he right in doing so?

In similar positions, …e6-e5 would be classified as a freeing move, as it opens up Black’s otherwise cramped game; in addition, it signifies the central action indicated in such positions, as a counter-measure in the face of the encircling movement White is striving for on the queenside (central play against play on the wing). Yet White correctly plays **1.b4!** (instead of 1.♖e1). Note the ensuing play: **1…e5? 2.dxe5 ♞xe5 3.♝f4! ♞xf3+ 4.♛xf3 ♛d8 5.h3** (Diagram 340)

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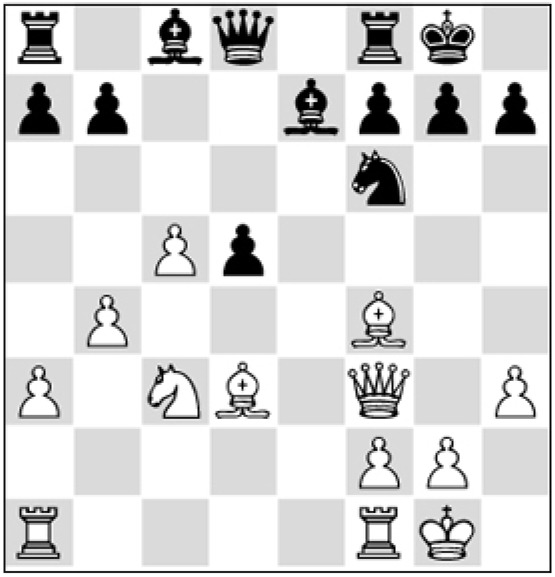
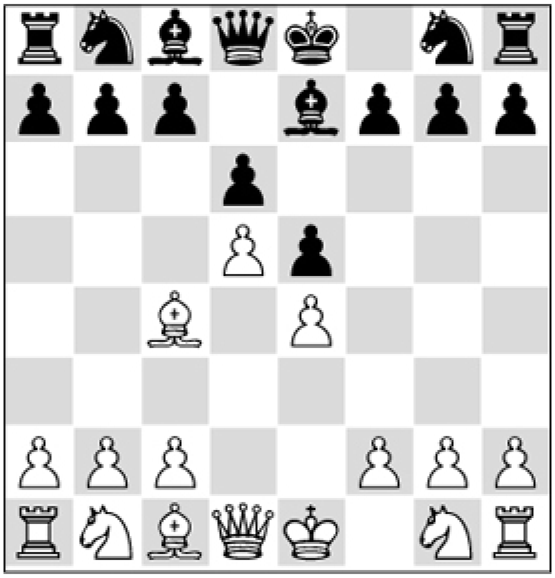


followed by ♖ad1 and the occupation of d4 (a blockade square) with a bishop or knight, giving White the better game. Black, to start with, was behind in tempi, hence the miscarriage of his freeing action.

341



Example 2 (Diagram 341) shows us that it is not possible to hold up a freeing advance indefinitely when in the nature of things the time is ripe for it. Our aim in similar cases must therefore be directed simply at making the freeing maneuver as *difficult* as possible; yet we should not be obstinate about undermining an advance that cannot be prevented anyway. See the position in Diagram 341, which arises after the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝c4 ♝e7 4.d4 d6 5.d5 ♞b8**. The pawn chain is made up of pawns at e4 and d5 vs. those at e5 and d6; White will try for c4-c5 and Black for …f7-f5. Violent measures, such as, say, 6.♗d3 ♘f6 7.h3 0-0 8.g4? would not be in accordance with the position. On the other hand, **6.♝d3 ♞f6 7.c4 0-0 8.♞c3 ♞e8 9.♛e2** is indicated, in order, after **9…f5**, to go in for the transaction **10.exf5 ♝xf5 11.♝xf5 ♜xf5 12.♞e4** (see the remarks on Diagram 313).

We note, then, that the prevention of freeing pawn moves (in so far as this seems necessary and feasible) is of the greatest import for positional play. This prevention is what we would like to be understood as ‘prophylaxis to the outside.’

It is much more difficult to grasp the idea of ‘prophylaxis to the inside’, for here are we dealing with an entirely new conception. We are in fact concerned here with obviating an evil that up to now has never been understood as such, which however can (and as a rule does) have a considerable disturbing effect on our position. The evil lies in the fact that our pieces are out of touch (or in insufficient contact) with the points that are of strategic importance to us. Because I understand this situation as an evil, I am compelled to postulate the strategic requirement that our own strategically important points must be over-protected – that is, protecting these points more than they are attacked – and to do so ahead of time. My formulation of this argument runs as follows:

Weak points – still more, however, strong points – in brief, all the points that we can be grouped together under the collective concept ‘strategically important points,’ must be over-protected!

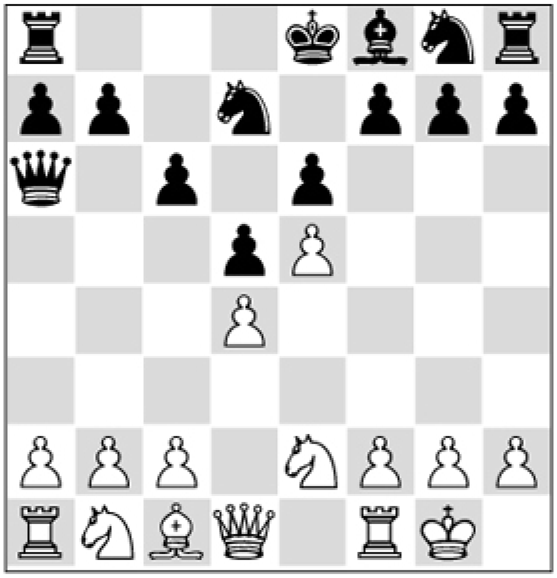
For if the pieces are so engaged, they are rewarded for helping to protect strategically important points by being well posted in every respect themselves. Hence the importance of the strategic point imbues them with its luster, and not without a degree of solemnity and fervor.

So much for my formulation.

There are two explanatory remarks to be made at this point. First, if we think back to our analysis of the passed pawn, we recall the enigmatic fact that blockade squares nearly always prove to be good squares in every respect. A piece that has resigned itself to dreary guard-duty (that is, on a blockade square) unexpectedly finds it has a lot to do; this strategically meritorious act on the part of the blockader (a blockade carried out therefore by the precepts of the art) finds its reward in the form of an increase in possible actions that can be undertaken from the blockade square – just as in the fairy tales, where good deeds are always rewarded!

The idea of over-protection in a certain sense is nothing other than what he have just outlined but in an expanded form, as we can see from the following example (Diagram 342).

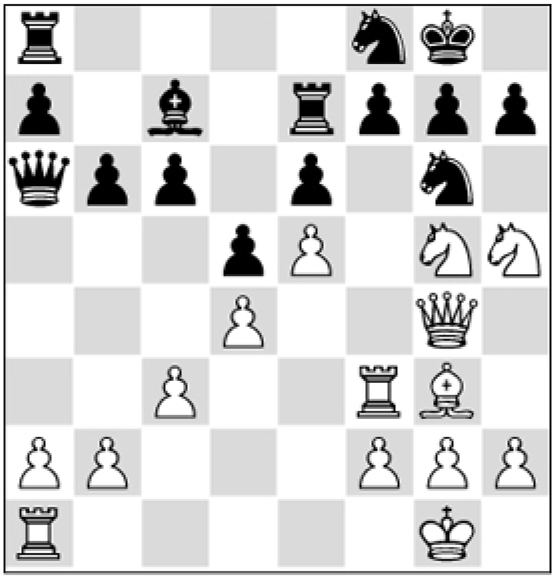
342



Nimzowitsch-Giese
(Match, 1913)
White to move. Which point should be over-protected?

We over-protect, for example, a pawn that has been pushed forward; for example, the e5-pawn in the diagrammed position. The protection afforded by the d4-pawn is insufficient, for on Black’s …c6-c5 White plans to answer with dxc5 (giving up the base of the chain so as to occupy the now-freed-up d4-square). We over-protect the e5-pawn with a piece as follows: **9.♞d2** In the game Nimzowitsch-Giese, there followed **9…♞e7 10.♞f3! ♞g6 11.♜e1! ♝b4** To eventually bring the bishop to c7 and then play …f7-f6, this in spite of White’s over-protection. **12.c3 ♝a5 13.♝f4!** The third over-protection! **13…0-0 14.♝g3 ♝c7 15.♞g5** And now the inner strength of over-protection is evidenced in a drastic way. The apparently lifeless ‘over-protectors’, namely the knight on f3, the bishop on f4, and the old warhorse on e1, suddenly raise a considerable uproar. **15…♜fe8 16.♞f4 ♞h8 17.♛g4 ♞f8 18.♜e3!** See how the old warhorse rejoices in the prospect of a brisk and joyful struggle! **18…b6** Somewhat better was 18…♗d8. **19.♞h5 ♞hg6 20.♜f3 ♜e7** (see Diagram 343)

343

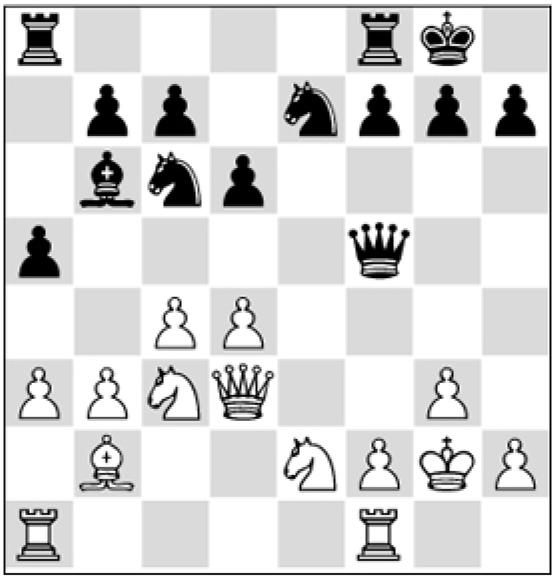


The career of the over-protector!

21.♘f6+ ♚h8 and now White could win flat out with **22.♘fxh7 ♞xh7 23.♘xf7+ ♜xf7 24.♖xf7**.
The idea here was as follows: over-protecting a strategically important point was a ‘good deed’. The reward for such service came in the form of a great radius of activity for the over-protectors!

Just one more example (for later on, a whole chapter will be devoted to over-protection in all its nuances). See Diagram 344.

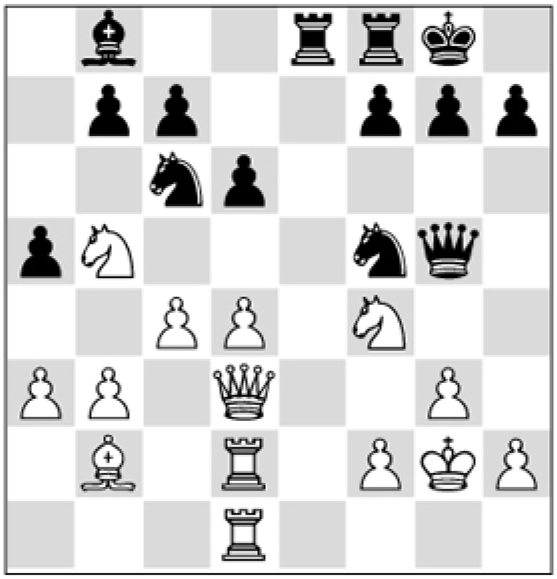
344



Nimzowitsch-Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925
Alekhine’s last move was 14…♕f5!. There followed 15.♖ad1 ♖ae8. Which point now calls for over-protection?

After **15.♜ad1 ♜ae8** there follows an effective maneuver that seems quite improbable: 16.♖d2! and 17.♖fd1. Why? Because the queen on d3 (and perhaps the d4-pawn as well) forms the key point of the white position, hence her overprotection is appropriate. And in fact, after a few more moves the two rooks turn out to be quite serviceable combatants (they do an excellent job defending their king). After **16.♜d2!** play proceeded **16…♛g5 17.♜fd1 ♝a7! 18.♞f4 ♞f5 19.♞b5 ♝b8**:

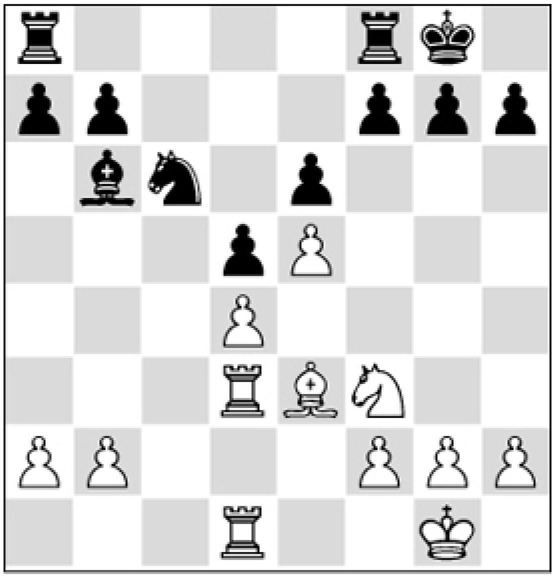
345



Now, **20.♜e2** followed by ♖de1 should have been played, when the over-protectors would have come into their own.

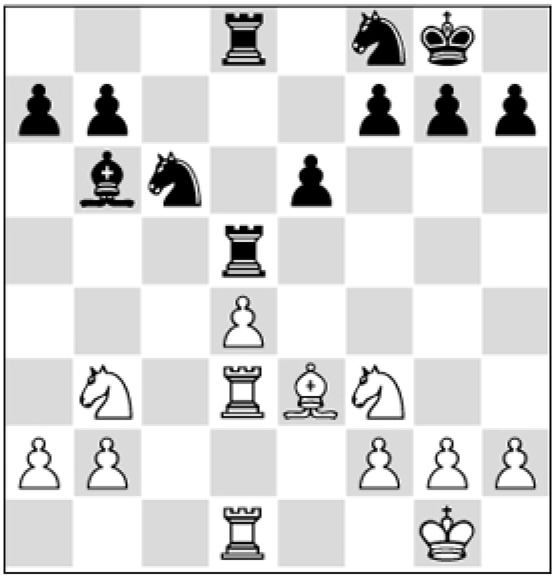
The second point we wish to make is that the precept of over-protection naturally applies quite especially to strong points – hence to important central squares, which are bound to come under heavy fire from more than one quarter, to strong blockade points, and to strong passed pawns. Ordinary weak points should not be over-protected, for this could easily lead to the defending pieces finding themselves in passive positions (cf. Chapter 6, Section 2). But a weak pawn that forms the base of an important pawn chain may and should be quite well over-protected. To illustrate this, let us return to our old friend the pawn chain with pawns at d4 and e5 against d5 and e6. See Diagram 346 and compare the position with that in Diagram 347.

346



The secured base at d4 increases the significance of the attacking (wedge) pawn at e5. The accumulation of the rooks on the d-file therefore simply functions as deliberate over-protection (‘the dagger concealed in the robe’)

347



Here the accumulation of white rooks does not work to over-protect but simply as part of a passive defensive position that we classify as evil

In the former position, the rooks protect the weak base (every base of a pawn is in a certain sense to be classed as weak, since the only sure defense, by a pawn, is lacking). Yet this protection indirectly works for the benefit of the strong e5-pawn, for, as we know, the strengthening of the base of the chain entails at the same time the strengthening of the whole chain as well. It is well for the reader to review, for example, my game against Tarrasch (Game 18), in which, after laboriously working to over-protect d4, and fully achieving this, I was able to obtain a strong attack that led to victory. The soul of this attack was, however, the pawn at e5, which could now trust in and lean on the resplendently healthy d4-pawn.

In Diagram 347, on the other hand, the e5-pawn is missing; hence the scale of the role that the rooks at d3 and d1 would have played is much reduced. Of the once so responsible ‘role’ played by these rooks really nothing more remains but the tedious duty of keeping the d4-pawn from going under. In other words, the deployment of the over-protection in Diagram 347 does not imply any sort of attacking idea in the upcoming play (in marked contrast to the situation in Diagram 346) and therefore functions merely as a ‘passive deployment of defensive forces’, against which we (see Chapter 6, Section 2) felt called upon to issue the most emphatic warning.

To recapitulate:

RULE: **The law of over-protection applies in general only to strong points.**

Weak points may lay claim to over-protection only in those cases where they help support other, strong points (the weak pawn as a nurse for a giant in the process of growth!).

4. Besides prophylaxis, the idea of ‘collective mobility’ of the pawn mass forms a major postulate of my teaching on positional play. The reader who complains about far too many strict laws is made amends to in a small but nice way.

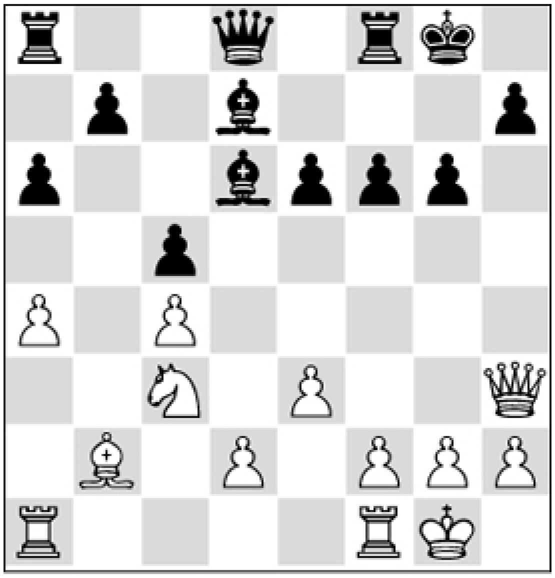
In the final analysis, positional play is nothing other than a contest between mobility (the pawn mass) and an inclination to restrain this. In this full-scale struggle the inherently important stratagem of prophylaxis is merely a means to an end.

It is of great importance to strive for the mobility of our pawn mass, for a mobile mass can have an overwhelming effect in its lust to expand.

This mobility is not always impaired by the presence of a pawn that has perhaps been left behind in a general advance (a backward pawn). For instance, the pawn left behind can function as a nurse.
In the case of a mobile pawn mass we must therefore require that it move forward as a unit and not be content with the individual mobility of the separate pawns, each looking out for itself.

Look at Diagram 348.

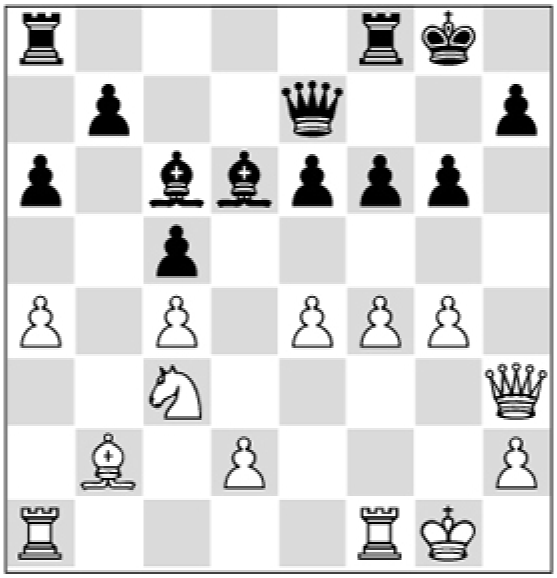
348



Nimzowitsch-Prof. Michel Semmering 1926
White establishes a ‘mobile pawn mass’ and leaves one at home – as a nurse! How?

We expect that sooner or later White will play the equalizing advance d2-d4, to be rid of the backward d2-pawn. The actual game, however, saw the more correct **17.f4 ♕e7 18.e4! ♗c6 19.g4!** (Diagram 349):

349



The pawns at e4, f4, and g4, in conjunction with the diagonal b2-h8 lurking in the background, functioning as storm troops. The backward d2-pawn, after d2-d3, supports the c- and e-pawns

White wins easily (see Game 23 at the end of this chapter).

In my game vs. Rubinstein at Dresden 1926, too, I was in no hurry to be rid of my backward pawn. Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein: **1.c4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4! ♞b4 6.♝c4 e6 7.0-0 ♞8c6** On 7…a6 I would not have been in any hurry to advance the backward pawn, for 8.d4 cxd4 9.♕xd4 ♕xd4 10.♘xd4 ♗c5 11.♗e3 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♘c2! 13.♖ad1 ♘xd4 14.♖xd4 ♘c6 16.♖d2 b5 followed by …♗b7 and …♔e7 would only lead to equality. I would have chosen instead 9.d3 (after a prior 8.a3 ♘c6), when after ♗e3 and the mobilization of my major pieces I would have been well prepared for an attack. **8.d3 ♞d4** Otherwise a2-a3 follows. **9.♞xd4 cxd4 10.♞e2**, and after f2-f4 White gets a mobile pawn mass effectively supported by the bishop at c4 (see Game 28 at the end of this chapter).

The lenient judgment we arrived at in the discussion above regarding the backward pawn is one we hope will help win us many a heart in the world of chess! Many a reader will in fact have experienced our principle of over-protection as far too strict a demand. How, he will say, can a player not be allowed to maneuver to his heart’s content but rather has to feel obliged to protect some mysterious points that have not been attacked even once? Let my lenient judgment in the case of backward pawns serve this most esteemed reader as consolation and recompense.

And now let us turn our attention to that frightful region in which the amateur (and sometimes also the master player) all too often stumbles. We mean the center!

5. The center

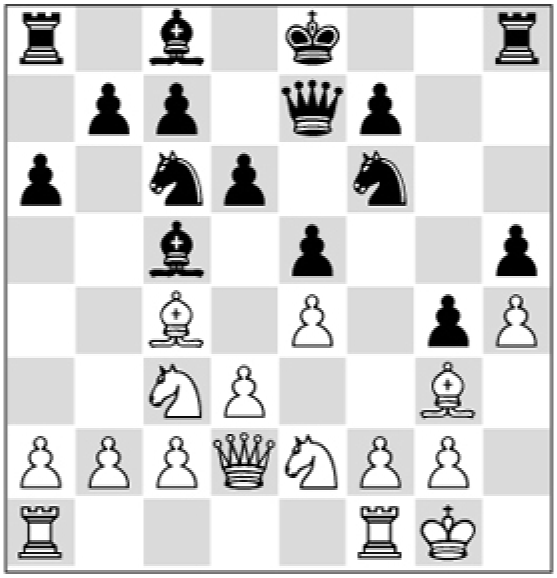
Insufficient watch kept on the central territory as a typical, ever-recurring error. The center as the Balkans of the chessboard. On the popular but strategically dubious diversion from the center to the wings. On the invasion of the center. The occupation of the central squares.

It may be taken as common knowledge that in certain situations it is necessary to aim our pieces at the enemy center, for instance in positions characterized by white pawns at e4 and f4 and black pawns at d6 and f7 (or pawns at c4 and d4 vs. pawns at c6 and e6). On the other hand it is less well known that it is a strategic necessity to keep the center under observation even if it is to some extent barricaded. The center is the Balkans of the chessboard: hostile actions are always in the air.

I am thinking first of the quite harmless-seeming (in the sense of the center) position that arises after the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 g5 8.♗g3** (cf. the discussion of Diagram 253). Here Black’s center, in spite of the harmlessness mentioned, is nevertheless threatened by two different courses of hostile action: (1)♗b5 and d3-d4, and (2)♘d5 followed by c2-c3 and d3-d4.

Another example is provided by the beginning of the game Capablanca-Martinez (1914). After **1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♗c5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d3 ♘c6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 g5 7.♗g3 h5 8.h4 g4 9.♕d2 d6 10.♘ge2 ♕e7 11.0-0** Black thought he could afford himself the move **11…a6** (Diagram 350).

350



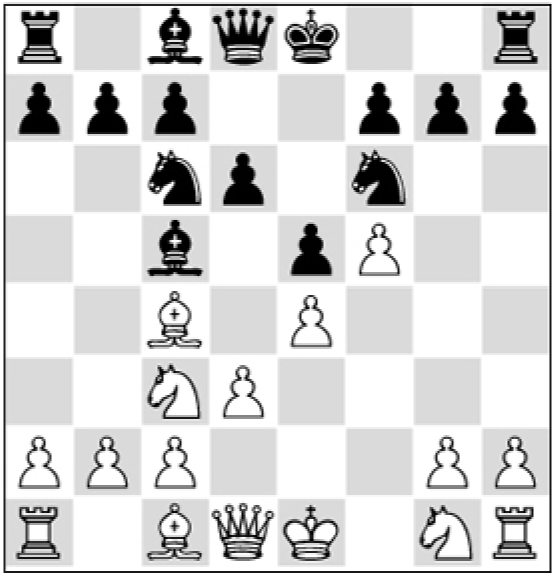
Capablanca-Martinez, 1914
White punishes the waste of time involved in Black’s last move (11…a6) by an invasion of the center

But in reality the loss of time involved in this move falls all the heavier on the scale, as the position is only apparently closed. In fact, it can be opened at any moment (with ♘d5). (This holds true for ninety percent of all closed central positions.) There followed **12.♘d5! ♘xd5 13.exd5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 ♗xd4 15.c3 ♗b6 16.d4 f6!**, when White has a decisive advantage as I shall demonstrate at a later phase of the game. [Editor’s note: after the next ten moves, 17.♖ae1 ♗d7 18.♗f4 0-0-0 19.♗e3 ♖de8 20.g3 ♔b8 21.b4 ♗a4 22.♗b3 ♕d7 23.dxe5 ♗xe3 24.fxe3 fxe5 25.♖f6 ♗xb3 26.axb3 ♖e7 we have the position in Diagram 229.]

After the first six opening moves, Black, with a bit more skilful central strategy, could have had the initiative: **1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♗c5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d3 ♘c6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4** and now **6…d6** (though 6…♗e7 would be the simplest continuation). If now 7.♘d5 g5 8.♗g3, then 8…♗e6, with the familiar threat 9…♗xd5 10.exd5 ♘e7 11.♗b5+ c6 12.dxc6 bxc6 and Black dominates the center. Another possibility is 6…♘d4 (instead of 6…d6); e.g., 7.♘d5 g5 8.♗g3 c6! 9.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 10.c3 ♘e6 11.h4 d6 followed by …♗d7 and …0-0 and an eventual …♘f4.

All these examples teach us that the function of a knight on c3/c6 does not consist solely of undermining the respective pawn advances (to d4/d5). No, these steeds also have a clear duty, at the first omission on the part of the opponent, to undertake an invasion of the center with ♘d5/♘d4. Such neglect tends to be common among many amateurs, who often show a preference for a premature action on the flank without troubling themselves all that much about whether they might be taking too many troops away from the center, is unfortunately an undeniable fact. How else could the following amateurish line of play persist for so many years (mind you, in master tournaments as well!!): 1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘c6 5.f4 d6 6.f5?? (Diagram 351; 6.♘f3 is of course the right move):

351



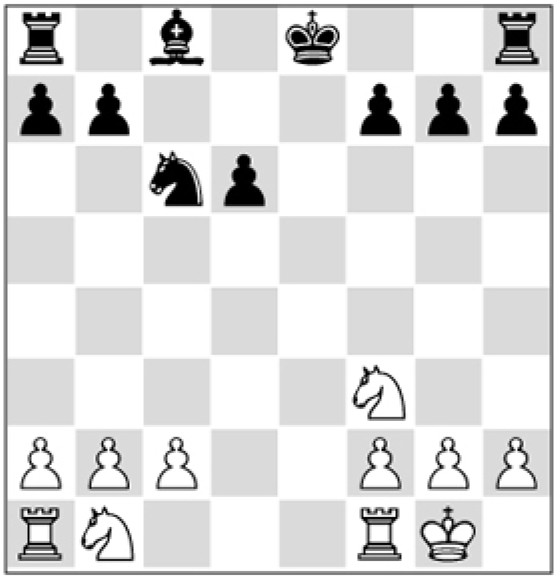
White’s last move, 6.f5, does nothing to keep an eye on the center, but rather is a movement away from the center, relieving the tension there. How is such a faulty strategy to be punished?

With 6…♘d4 followed by …c7-c6, …b7-b5, …♕b6, and perhaps …d6-d5, Black gets a powerful game in the center (and on the queenside) and a pronounced advantage overall.

One cannot caution the student enough against such a ‘pivot-maneuver’ away from the center. I offer the following, less bloody example, inasmuch as I may be speaking to readers whom, fortunately, I do not always have to threaten with Satan and Beelzebub. The game runs: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.dxe5 ♘xe4 5.♗d3 ♘c5 6.♗f4 ♘xd3+** Already at this early point Black had an opportunity, by …♘e6 and …

d6-d5, to build up his position on scientific principles. The knight at e6 would have been our elastic, strong blockader. **7.♕xe3 ♘c6 8.0-0** We prefer 8.♘c3 and 0-0-0. **8…♗e7 9.exd6 ♗xd6 10.♗xd6 ♕xd6 11.♕xd6 cxd6** (Diagram 352)

352



White, after 12.♖e1+ ♗e6, carried out the popular ‘diversion’ ♘g5, etc. What central strategy was indicated here (instead of 12.♖e1+)?

White played **12.♖e1+? ♗e6 13.♘g5** The diversion characteristic of non-positional players! 13…♔d7 14.c3, when White does not stand particularly well. Correct (in Diagram 352) was **12.♘c3!** (instead of 12.♖e1+) followed by 13.♘b5 and 14.♘d4, with a centralized, solid game.

And now we give a whole game, characteristic of the disdain for centralization found even among strong players.

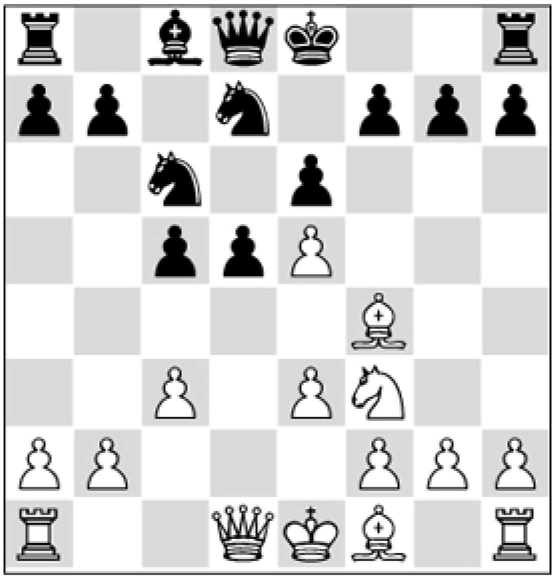
K.Berndtsson Kullberg-S. J. Bjurulf

Sweden 1920

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗f4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.c3 b6

The following line of play seems best here: 5…♘c6!; if now 6.♘d2 ♗e7 7.h3 (directed against 7…♘h5), then 7…♗d6! 8.♘e5 ♗xe5 9.dxe5 ♘d7 10.♘f3, when a fierce fight will revolve around the e5-square (Diagram 353).

353



Black to move. A typical example of a struggle around a central point (here e5)

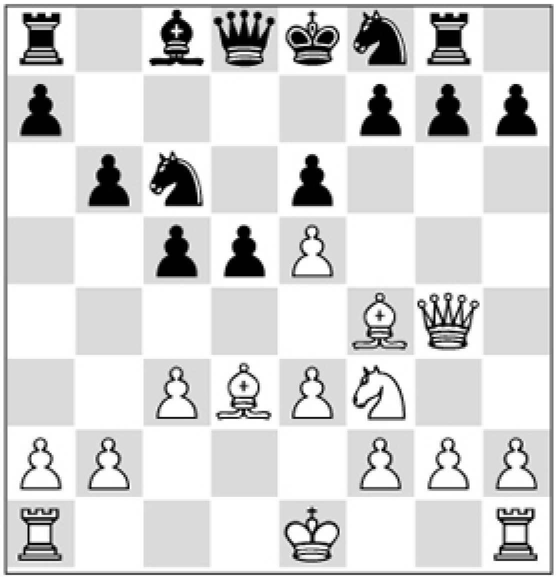
Our best advice is to recommend to the positional player that he gain practice in such central struggles. A good plan at this point would be 10…a6! 11.♗d3 f6! (not 11…♕c7 because of 12.0-0 ♘xe5? 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♕h5 and wins), in order after 12.exf6 ♕xf6 to take possession of the disputed e5-square (and not a pawn on e5) with …e6-e5. We advise our kindly readers to study this position. The move 5…b6 is to be viewed as a typical error, in that it completely disregards the fact of a central theater of war.

6.♘bd2 ♗d6 7.♘e5

I like this move very much, although in this position there happens to be a tactical possibility that is perhaps objectively preferable, namely 7.♗b5+ ♗d7? 8.♗xd6 ♗xb5 9.dxc5. But 7.♘e5 is the more logical move, for 5…b6 was a loss of tempo for the purposes of central play and so the center was ripe for an invasion.

7…♗xe5 8.dxe5 ♘fd7 9.♕g4 ♖g8 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♗d3 ♘f8

354



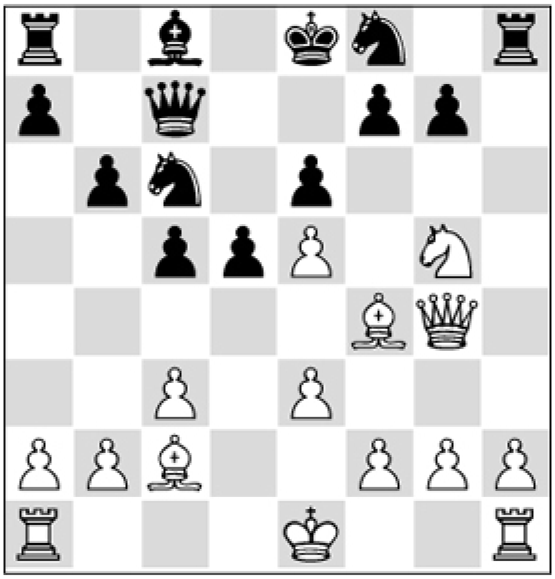
White to move. The e5-square is unquestionably in White’s possession. But where should the attack be directed, on the right or on the left or in the middle?

12.♘g5

White commits the strategic mistake of undervaluing the importance of the e5-square, the key point of the whole position. Under no circumstances should the attack be conducted so as to permit the safety of this point to be put at risk. On the contrary, as we know, over-protection of this point was the proper course. The correct play was to remain passive on the kingside, to advance in the center with e3-e4 and on the queenside with b2-b4 and a2-a4, perhaps as follows: 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.b4! c4 (not 13…cxb4 14.cxb4 ♘xb4 because of 15.♗g5, with the win of a piece or some other similar unpleasantness) 14.♗c2 ♕d7 15.a4 a6! (if 15…0-0-0, then 16.a5 bxa5 17.b5! with a winning attack) 16.e4! 0-0-0 17.♗e3 ♔c7 18.a5!, with a decisive attack.

12…♛c7! 13.♝xh7 ♜h8 14.♝c2

355

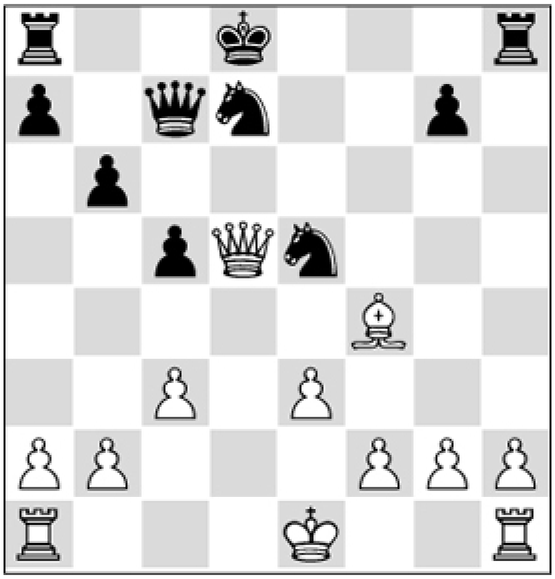


Black to move. How should he punish his opponent for his failure to keep the central territory (e5) under observation over the past few moves?

14…♗b7?

Black must seek to take over the e5-square, dangerous as this may seem. So simply 14…♘xe5!, when he would have had an entirely satisfactory, and perhaps even the better, game. For instance, 14…♘xe5! 15.♕g3 f6 16.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 17.♕xf3 e5! 18.♕xd5? ♗b7 19.♗a4+ ♔e7 and Black wins a piece. Or (14…♘xe5) 15.♗a4+ ♔e7!, with the threat …♘d3+. Bad on the other hand would be the reply 15…♗d7, for with 16.♗xd7+ ♘fxd7 17.♘xe6! fxe6 18.♕xe6+ ♔d8 19.♕xd5 (Diagram 356)

356



White would get three pawns for the piece sacrificed and a strong attack. But with (14…♘xe5 15.♗a4+) 15…♔e7 Black, as stated, would have obtained an excellent game. The strategic events in this game stand revealed in the following light: 5…b6 did nothing for the center, hence White grew great and powerful there (the e5-knight). But on the 12th move he neglected the key point e5, and this, with correct play on the part of Black, could have led to the loss of his entire advantage. We see how the central strategy dominates the game.

15.♘f3 g6 16.♗g5?

Scarcely had he escaped (by luck) the dangers in the center, than the player of the white pieces, who is looking for combinative play, again sacrifices his chief positional asset at e5. The over-protectors, the knight at f3 and the bishop on f4, should have stayed where they were; indicated here was the course demonstrated in the note to White's 12th move.

16…♘xe5!

Now he shows courage!

17.♘xe5 ♕xe5

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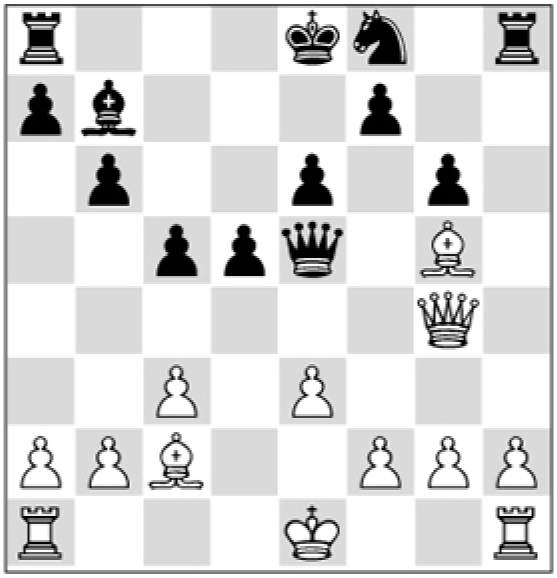


White must (and can) win back the e5-square. How?

18.h4

Without question White should play to recover the e5-square, therefore 18.♗f4!. If 18…♕h5, then 19.♕g3 f6 20.♗d6, when Black could hardly succeed in consolidating his position, which is threatened on every side and in every corner.

After the text move, on the other hand, Black could make himself fully secure.

18…b5

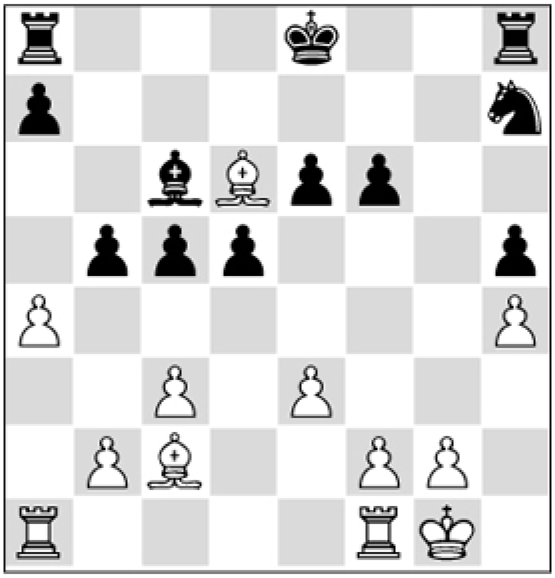
This means not just a loss of time, but also a weakening of the c5-pawn and allowing a2-a4. Correct was 18…♘d7; if 19.♗a4, then 19…f6 20.♗f4 ♕e4! 21.♗b5 g5 or 21…0-0-0, when Black stands well.

19.0-0 ♞h7 20.♝f4 ♛h5 21.♛xh5 gxh5 22.a4

Mr. Berndtsson plays the rest of the game very cleverly!

22…♝c6 23.♝e5 f6 24.♝d6

358



24…bxa4

If 24…c4, then 25.axb5 ♗xb5 26.♖a5 and ♗a4, with strong play down the a-file.

25.♝xc5 ♚d7 26.♝xa4 a6 27.♝xc6+ ♚xc6 28.♜a5! ♜hb8 29.♝b4!

To free up the line of attack from a5 to h5.

29…♜b5 30.♜fa1 ♜xa5 31.♜xa5 ♚b6 32.e4 ♜d8 33.exd5 exd5 34.c4 dxc4 35.♜xh5 ♜d7

White has reached his goal: the passed pawns cannot be stopped.

36.g4 ♜g7 37.f3 ♚b7 38.♚f2

and White won:

38…♜f7 39.♜c5 ♞f8 40.♜xc4 ♞g6 41.h5 ♞e5 42.♜d4 ♞c6 43.♜e4 f5 44.♜f4 ♞e5 45.♜xf5 ♜xf5 46.gxf5

1-0

With the help of this amusing and imaginative game (in spite of all its omissions) we have had a quite good opportunity to examine and explain the problem of the center. Black's 5th move showed an inadequate watchfulness over the center. An 'under-protection' of the center, at the same time a characteristically mistaken diversion of force from the center to the wing, we saw at White's 12th turn. On the 14th move Black underestimates the value of the key point, otherwise he would have risked 14…♘xe5. And finally, our notes to move 18 present an instructive example of the occupation of central squares.

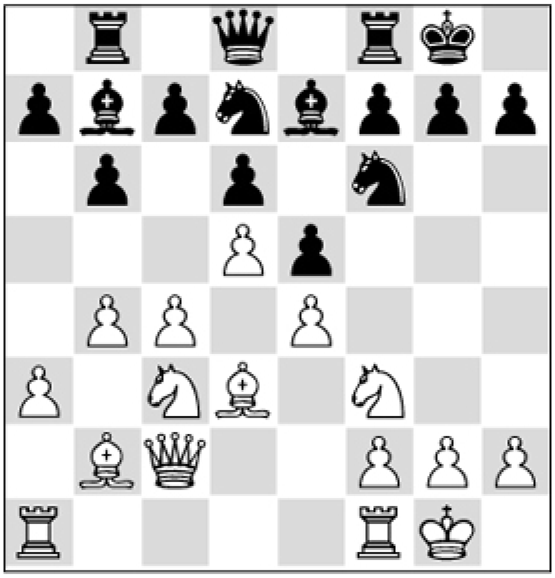
The moral of the story is:
(1) Keep a watch over the center!
(2) Over-protect!
(3) No premature diversions from the center!
(4) After the pawns are gone (e5) we must at least occupy the points with pieces! (Pieces as substitute blockers for the pawn chain; see the chapter on the pawn chain.)

6. In what does the *leitmotiv* of the true strategy consist?

Answer: in a conscious over-protection of the center (instead of the misguided but popular disregard of it) and, further, in a systematic execution of the stratagem of centralization (instead of the misguided, but popular in the widest circles, 'diversion'). Play in the center vs. play on the wing will be examined more closely: the 'central player' merits the victory.

In the exceedingly characteristic game just presented we saw how the 'diversion' and the principle (as it were) of 'non-attention given to the key central points' led to play that was altogether curious and amusing. The just-mentioned 'diversion' also appears from time to time in master games; we recall only the game Opocensky-Nimzowitsch at Marienbad (Game 20). See Diagram 359.

359



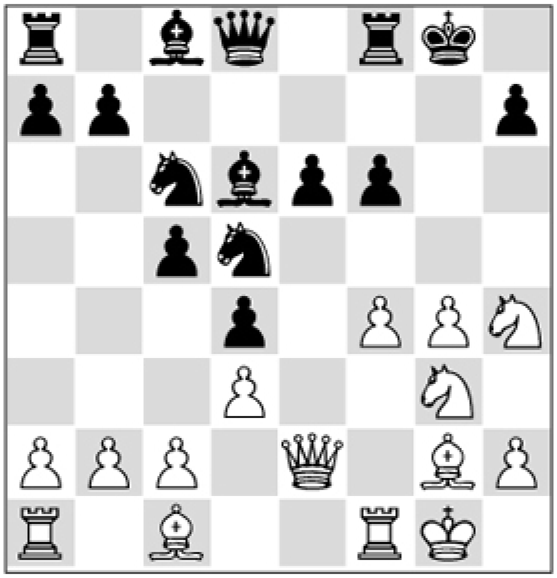
White maneuvers the c3-knight over to the kingside, though its true function was to look out for Black’s …c7-c6 – again an example of an inappropriate diversion!

The following moves were played: **13.♘e2? ♘h5 14.♕d2 g6 15.g4 ♘g7 16.♘g3 c6!** The complete diversion of the knight has altered the situation to such an extent that Black, though quite constricted on the queenside, can now go over to the attack on this very wing!

But centralization is and remains typical of master-level games, and the talented Czech master Opocensky is of course no exception. Alekhine, in particular, makes use of this strategy with special fondness, and this (in addition to playing against squares of a particular color) has become the leitmotiv of all his games. Even when a knife has been brandished and seemingly placed at his throat in the form of a kingside attack, he nevertheless finds time to amass troops in the center! The chess adept who is eager to learn should take a lesson from this!

In our game at Semmering 1926, after **1.e4 ♘f6** (Alekhine had Black) **2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 ♘fd7 4.f4 e6 5.♘f3 c5 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 ♘b6** Alekhine found himself in difficulties through his failure to play …f7-f6. **10.♘e2 d4 11.g4** The onset of a violent attack. **11…f6 12.exf6 gxf6** Otherwise White would centralize the knight with ♘g3-e4. **13.♘g3 ♘d5! 14.♕e2 ♗d6 15.♘h4**

360



Nimzowitsch-Alekhine
Semmering 1926
The pawn at g4 and the dispersed knight on h4 point to a diversion on the part of White. The knight on g3 has a fairly clear conscience in terms of centralization, certainly, but it is also peering over at h5. Black, in contrast, in his d4-pawn and knight at d5, is in command of a fine centralization, which he builds up further in the play to follow

15…♞ce7 16.♝d2 ♛c7 17.♛f2 And now the inner strength of the central build-up was made clear by the surprising continuation **17…c4! 18.dxc4 ♞e3!**, when Alekhine achieved equality. The remainder of the game, with detailed analysis, may be found in *Chess Praxis*, Game 15.

I, too, both theoretically and practically, am absolutely on the side of centralization. Examine, let us say, my game vs. **Yates** (Semmering 1926): **1.e4 e6** (I had Black) **2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♝b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♝d3 ♞e7 6.♞e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♝g4 8.f3 ♝h5 9.♞f4 ♝g6 10.♞ce2 ♝d6 11.♛e1** Here, 11.♗xg6 followed by ♘d3 would have been more in the spirit of centralization. The points c5 and e5 would then have been kept under constant observation. **11…c5! 12.dxc5 ♝xc5+ 13.♚h1 ♞bc6 14.♝d2 ♜e8 15.♞xg6 hxg6!** Creating a central point on f5. **16.f4** The normal course of things would have been 16.♕h4 ♘f5 17.♕xd8 ♖axd8, when Black has a slight endgame advantage. **16…♞f5 17.c3 d4! 18.c4 ♛b6 19.♜f3 ♝b4** To clear the central square e3. **20.a3 ♝xd2 21.♛xd2 a5** Restraint. **22.♞g1 ♜e3 23.♛f2 ♜ae8 24.♜d1 ♛b3 25.♜d2 ♞d6 26.c5 ♞c4 27.♝xc4 ♛xc4** The c5-pawn is weak, the blockader at d3 has been eliminated, and Black’s centralization is more bothersome for White than ever. **28.♖c2 ♕d5! 29.♖c1 ♕e4!** See Diagram 361.

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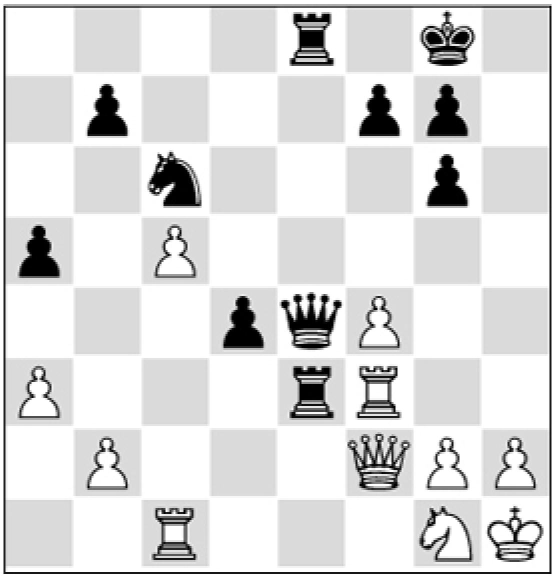

Yates-Nimzowitsch
Semmering 1926
The possession of the open central file, the d4-pawn, and in particular the position of the queen stamp Black’s build-up as centralized to a high degree

Now the centralization is complete. Yates sacrifices a pawn with **30.f5** to defend himself against the ever-stronger pressure along the e-file. He lost in the endgame after **30…♖xf3 31.♘xf3 ♕xf5**.

Further striking examples of centralization can be found in abundance in master games. We mention here only Alekhine-Treybal (Baden-Baden 1925, Diagram 144) and Nimzowitsch-Spielmann (San Sebastian 1912, Diagram 231).

And now to the analysis of center vs. wing play! The game Nimzowitsch-Alekhine just given furnishes an example of how such a struggle usually proceeds.

The ‘central player’ always has the better prospects, most notably in the frequently recurring class of positions that we are about to outline: one player has undertaken a promising diversionary action against the enemy kingside; everything would be in fine order but (O, this ‘but’!) for the fact that the opponent is in control of a central file! And on this fact the flank attack tends to founder with astonishing regularity. Even more surprising than this regularity, however, is the fact that this diversion (carried out in the difficult circumstances outlined above) is always finding new adherents, and all of them then pay tribute (in the form of appalling defeats) to the unalterable truth:

RULE: **A central file prevails over an attack on the flank.**

The tribute paid by the author of this book consists of the paucity of not winning first prize (I lost the decisive game to Rubinstein at San Sebastian 1912 and had to settle for a tie for the second and third prizes).
First we shall note the schema for such a situation (Diagram 362).

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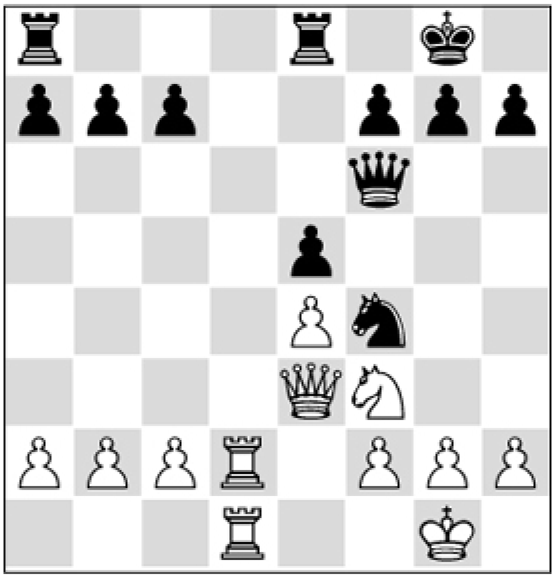


Schema for the thematic struggle of central file vs. flank attack. The mainstay of the latter is the knight on f4

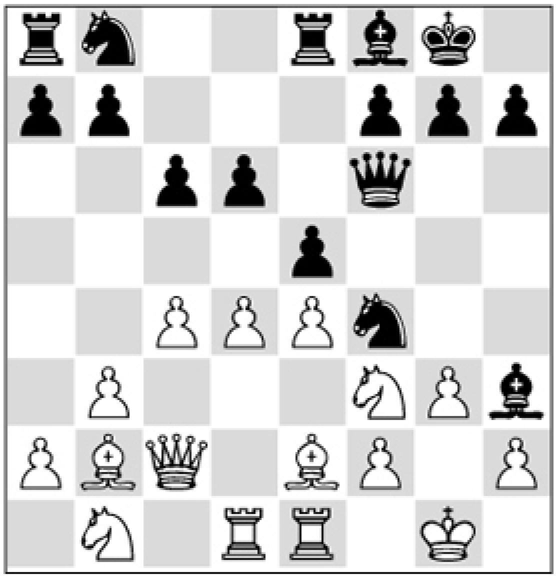
Black’s attack will always fail, because his rooks are under the unpleasant obligation to guard his base (here, the 7th and 8th ranks) against inroads by the white rooks. In addition, the e5-square is poorly protected (which is not by chance, as the knight on f3 is centralized in harmony with White’s whole set-up, which is directed against the central e5-square). As the whole matter is of extraordinary importance in terms of centralization, we illustrate it with a complete game.

Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch

San Sebastian 1912

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘f3 ♘bd7 4.♘c3 e5 5.e4 ♗e7 There is probably nothing objectionable about the immediate fianchetto (…g7-g6 and …♗g7). **6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.♕c2 ♗f8 9.b3 c6** Here, as Lasker very correctly pointed out in *B.Z. am Mittag*, 9…g6 followed by …♗g7, then …exd4 and …♘e5, was a sounder line of play. **10.♗b2 ♘h5?** The 'diversion', which merely cost me 2500 francs and the first prize! **11.g3 ♘b8 12.♖ad1** The central file looms up! **12…♕f6 13.♘b1 ♗h3 14.♖fe1 ♘f4** The fact that I would be able to bring the knight to f4 under any circumstances is something I foresaw when playing 10…♘h5. Too bad, for otherwise I would have withstood the temptation to undertake this diversion. See Diagram 363.

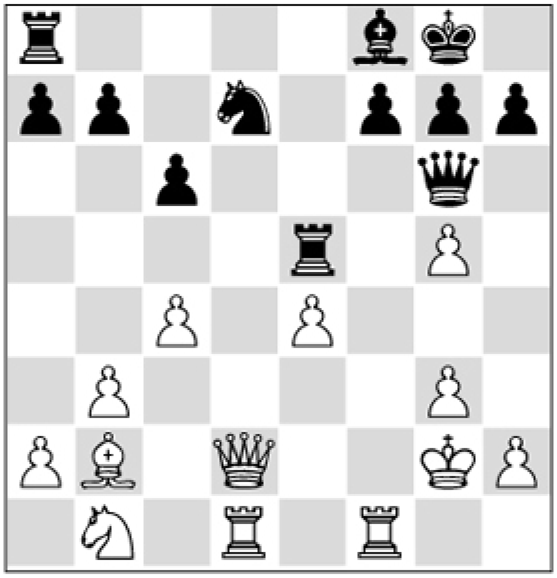
363



White (Rubinstein) demonstrates by fine central play the weakness of Black's diversion on the wing. How?

15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♘xe5! ♖xe5 17.♗f1! White could also establish an advantage with 17.♗xe5 ♘xe2+ 18.♕xe2 ♕xe5 19.♖d8 (the central file!). **17…♘d7 18.♕d2** Now the black pieces involved in the diversion are 'hanging' in the air. **18…♗xf1 19.♖xf1 ♘h3+ 20.♔g2 ♘g5** Threatening mate in two. **21.f4 ♕g6 22.fxg5** Diagram 364.

364



22…♜xe4? On 22…♕xe4+ 23.♔h3 ♖e7, 24.♖de1 would win a piece. Relatively best was 22…♖e7, after which the win could only be achieved by 23.♗a3! c5! (not 23…♕xe4+ because of 24.♔g1 c5 25.♖fe1, etc.) 24.♘c3, for after the compulsory 23…c5 Black would no longer have the possibility …♘c5, whereas White for his part would have the d5-square as a base of operations. **23.♛xd7 ♜e2+ 24.♜f2** and White won. **24…♛e4+ 25.♚g1 ♝c5 26.♝d4 ♝xd4 27.♛xd4 ♜e1+ 28.♜f1 ♜xf1+ 29.♚xf1 ♛h1+ 30.♚f2 ♛xh2+ 31.♚f3 f6 32.♛d2 ♛h3 33.♛d7 f5 34.♞c3 ♛h5+ 35.♚g2 ♛xg5 36.♛e6+ ♚h8 37.♞e2 ♛h5 38.♜d7 ♜e8 39.♞f4 ♜xe6 40.♞xh5**, 1-0. The worst defeat in the 22 years of my career!

At the end of this first chapter we will present a similarly instructive game: Kline-Capablanca.

7. The surrender of the center

As early as 1911 and 1912 I had published some game annotations in which I advocated a completely novel point of view, that the center need not necessarily be occupied by pawns; centrally posted pieces, or even lines directed at the center, I maintained, could take the place of pawns. The main thing was to keep the enemy central pawns under restraint. This idea I published in 1913 in the form of an article in the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* (edited by

Lindström) and to G. Marco. The Swedish paper brought out the article immediately, while the *Schachzeitung* did so much later, that is to say, only in 1923. The editor of the *Neue Wiener Schachzeitung* explained this tardiness as follows: ‘The article was accepted for publication by the *Wiener Schachzeitung*, which, due to the turmoil of war, had to abandon its efforts. Master Marco has just made it available to us, and we are publishing it all the more gladly as it is precisely now, in the age of the “neo-romantic school”, that the article enjoys a high degree of relevance.’ It runs as follows:

The Surrender of the Center – a Preconception

Regarding the Variation 3…dxe4

By A. Nimzowitsch

When in the much disputed variation **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3** Black plays **3…dxe4**, he is, according to the general view, giving up the center. I think this view is based on an incomplete, and misconceived, idea of the center. In what follows I shall try (1) to show that this is a preconception as such, and (2) to uncover its historical development.

First, the definition of the concept ‘center’. Here we have only to keep to the literal meaning of the word itself. The center: the squares situated in the middle of the board. *Squares, not pawns!* This is the essential thing, and must not under any circumstances be lost sight of.

The importance of the center, that is, the complex of squares in the middle of the board, as a base of further operations, is beyond question. Let us recall in particular one of Emanuel Lasker’s notes to a game: ‘White is not sufficiently well placed in the center to be able to operate on the wings.’ This is well conceived and at the same time illustrates the deep connection between the center and the wings, the center as a dominating principle and the wings as subordinate to it.

Control of the center is of the greatest importance. It follows from this that if we have built up our game in the center we are then able to operate on both wings at the same time, undertaking a diversion on the flank should the opportunity arise.

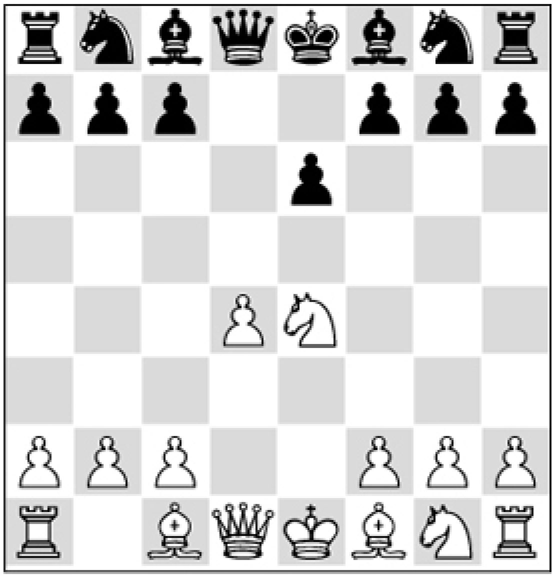
Without healthy conditions in the center a sound position is decidedly unthinkable.

We spoke just now of control of the center. What are we to understand by this? On what does this control depend?

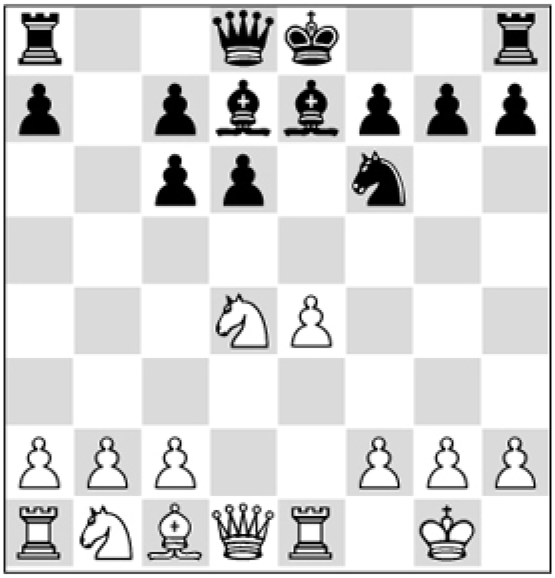
Current opinion has it that the center should be occupied by pawns; the ideal center consists of pawns at e4 and d4, but even occupation of the center by one of these two pawns (when the opponent does not have a corresponding pawn) means seizure of the center.

But is this really so? In Diagrams I and II, are we justified in speaking of the d4-pawn (Diagram I) and e4-pawn (Diagram II) as having taken control of the center?

I



II



If in a military engagement we proceed to take possession of some centrally placed territory that has not yet been secured, and if we occupy this disputed terrain with a handful of soldiers without having done anything to prevent an enemy bombardment of the ‘conquered’ location, would it ever occur to me to speak of a conquest of the terrain in question? Of course not. Why then should I do so in the context of a chess game?

After more careful thought it occurs to us that control of the center is a matter not merely of occupation, that is, of the placing of pawns there, but rather of our general effectiveness there – this being determined by quite other factors.

I have formulated this thought as follows:

With the disappearance of a pawn from the center (e.g., with …dxe4 in Diagram I), the center is far from being surrendered. A proper concept of the center is much broader.

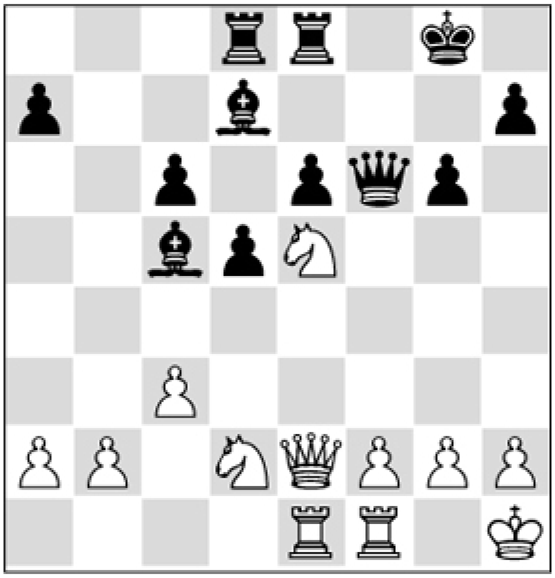
It is certainly true that it is just the pawns that are best suited to building up the center in its most stable form, but in the central domain pieces can substitute very well for pawns; and pressure exerted on the enemy position by the long-range action of rooks and bishops can be of considerable importance in this regard.

We meet just such a case in the 3…dxe4 variation. This move, so wrongly labeled a surrender of the center, in fact increases Black’s influence in the center quite significantly; for, by removing the obstruction at d5 with …dxe4, Black gets a free hand along the d-file and the diagonal b7-h1 (which he opens with …b7-b6).

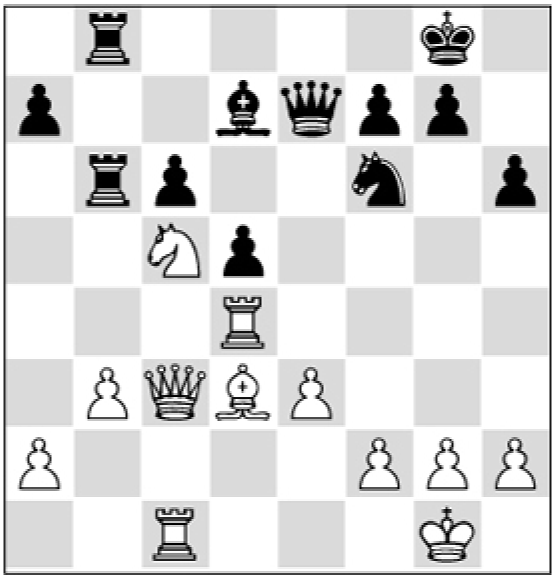
Obstruction! That is the darker side of occupying the center with pawns. A pawn, by its nature, is a good center-builder through its stability – as it were, its conservative inclination. But, alas, it is also an obstruction!

The fact that influence on the center is independent of the number of pawns occupying it is a lesson drawn from many examples, from which we select a few here.

III



IV



In Diagram III the central pawns at d5 and e6 are blocked by the knight on e5 and the c3-pawn, this from the game Nimzowitsch-Levenfish (Karlsbad 1911). In Diagram IV we see the isolated pawn couplet at c6 and d5 that results from the exchange of a knight on c6.

Each of these two cases show us a blockade. But blockade is an elastic concept, and it is often the case that a slight fixing of the pawn structure by a ‘pressuring’ rook, which at first intends nothing more than to hinder the advance of the enemy center, is the prelude to a complete crippling of the enemy position, a paralysis that culminates in a mechanical obstruction called a stoppage.

The instances of such pressure exerted against the enemy center are without number or limit (see also Diagram II). In these cases play leads either to a blockade followed by a subsequent annihilation (for only movement is life) or to uncomfortable positions for the defending pieces, which leads to the downfall of the ‘happy possessor’ of the center.

All this teaches us that nothing whatever is to be gained by counting the number of center pawns. Making arithmetic the starting point of a philosophy of the center can only be regarded as a thoroughly mistaken idea. It is an obsolete requisite of the (as regards time) first among the modern positional players.

I am certain that in a few more years no one will look upon 3…dxe4 as a ‘surrender of the center’. But with the disappearance of this prejudice the way will be clear for a fresh and brilliant development of chess philosophy and chess strategy.

A word on the origin of this prejudice; it is closely bound up with the history of positional play…

First, there was Steinitz. But what he had to say was so unfamiliar, and he himself was such a towering figure, that his ‘modern principles’ could not immediately become popular.

Then came Tarrasch, who took up Steinitz’s ideas and presented them to the public in a more palatable, watered-down form.

And now to consider our case. Steinitz, was, as we said, profound and great, but he was profoundest and greatest in his conception of the center! For instance, in his defense to the Spanish Game, …d7-d6, he knew how to transform the apparently so healthy enemy e4-pawn into a weakness that was clear to everyone – an unsurpassable achievement! Nothing lay further from his thoughts than a formalistic, arithmetic conception of the center…

So far the article, which also featured an illustrative game which we omit for lack of space. Our kindly reader may refer instead to the chapter on the pawn chain and in addition see Game 24 below. With this we must bid farewell to our preliminary treatment of the center, but in the discussions that follow we will take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself to return to the consideration of the cardinal problem in the matter of the center.

Illustrative games

Game 23

Aron Nimzowitsch
Walter Michel
Semmering 1926

This game illustrates the idea of ‘collective mobility’, but also touches on the problem of prophylaxis.

1.♞f3 d5 2.b3 ♞f6 3.♝b2 c5 4.e3 e6

An innovation. Black avoids the development of the knight at c6, as this could give rise to a pin (♗b5).

5.♞e5 ♞bd7 6.♝b5

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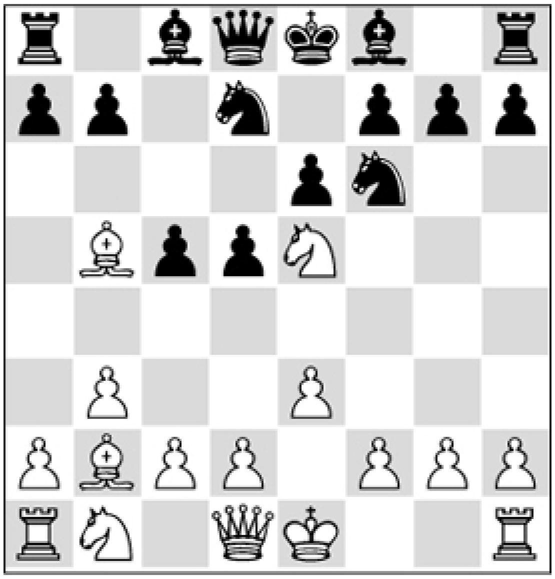

6…a6?

Here 6…♗d6 was better than the text move, firstly with respect to his development, but secondly because White is threatening to create strong play along the b2-g7 diagonal (looking to support the diagonal outpost at e5).

A prophylactic measure was urgently called for, e.g., 6…♗d6! 7.♘xd7 ♗xd7 8.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 9.♗xf6 gxf6, when the doubled pawn has both its brighter and darker aspects (cf. the next chapter, under ‘The Doubled Pawn’).

For that matter, we also consider 6…♗e7 better than the text.

7.♝xd7+ ♞xd7 8.♞xd7 ♝xd7 9.0-0 f6

An admission of weakness on the b2-g7 diagonal.

But 9…♗d6 could be considered; e.g., 10.♕g4 ♕c7 and …0-0-0.

10.c4 dxc4

White threatened 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♕h5+ and 13.♕xd5.

11.bxc4 ♝d6 12.♛h5+ g6 13.♛h6 ♝f8 14.♛h3!!

The best place for the queen, and one that was not easy to find. Now 14…e5 would only hand away the d5-point; e.g., 15.♕g3 (threatening 16.♗xe5) 15…♗g7 16.e4 followed by d2-d3 and ♘c3-d5, with a positional advantage for White.

14…♝e7 15.♞c3 0-0

White is willing to sacrifice the effectiveness of his d-pawn for the sake of placing his pawns at e4 and f4, which would leave his d-pawn backward.

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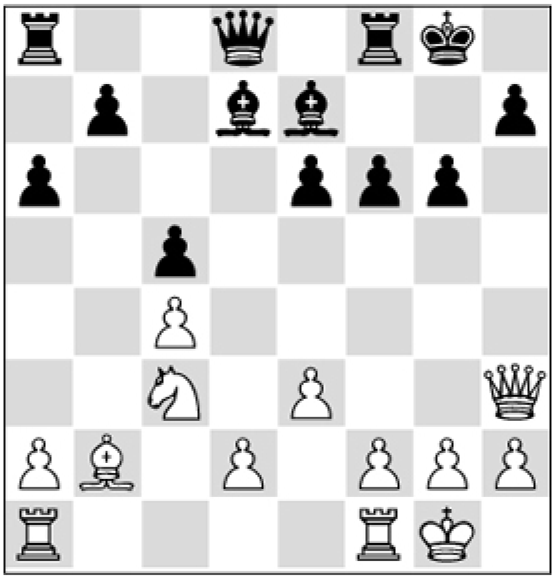

But this plan makes it necessary for him to paralyse the three black queenside pawns, hence:

16.a4! ♝d6 17.f4 ♛e7 18.e4 ♝c6 19.g4

A ‘pawn roller’ that can hardly be rendered innocuous.

19…f5

If Black were to just ‘sit and wait’, White would have the choice between a direct kingside attack and play against the c5-pawn. The latter might proceed this way: 19…♖ae8 20.♕e3, then a4-a5 and ♗a3, eventually driving away the bishop on d6 with e4-e5. After the text, Black loses the game through a mating attack.

20.gxf5 exf5

Or 20…gxf5 21.♔f2, etc.

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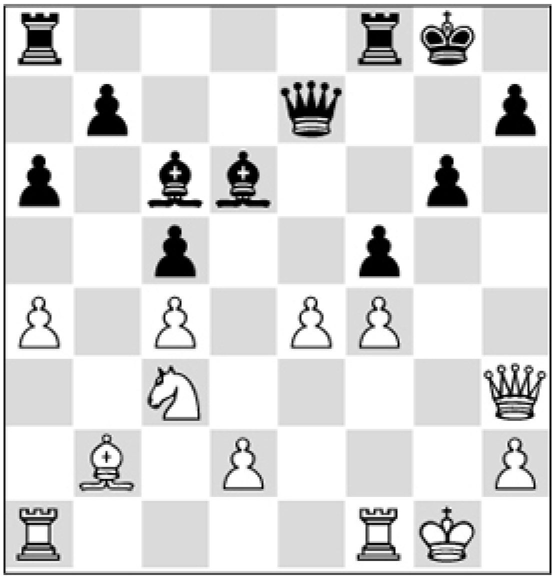

21.e5

The following variation may be dedicated to lovers of combinative complications: 21.♘d5 (instead of the e4-e5 played) 21…♕xe4 22.♖ae1 ♕xc4 23.♘e7+ ♗xe7 24.♖xe7 ♖f7 25.♖xf7 ♕xf7 26.♕c3 ♔f8!, when Black would seem to have an adequate defense.

21…♝c7 22.♞d5 ♝xd5

Had Black on his 21st move withdrawn his bishop to b8, he would now have been able to counter the penetrating ♘d5 with …♕e6. But this would have availed nothing; e.g., (21…♗b8 22.♘d5 ♕e6) 23.♘f6+ ♖xf6 24.exf6 ♕e4 (the counter-chance) 25.f7+, White winning after 25…♔xf7 26.♕xh7+ ♔f8 27.♕g7+ ♔e8 28.♖e1, etc.

23.cxd5 ♛d7 24.e6!

And Black resigned, since after 24…♕xd5, 25.♕h6 forces either checkmate or loss of the rook, and if 24…♕e7, the ominous queen comes to c3.

The surrender of the center

The following game shows how easily the premature surrender of the center can lead to a debacle. Yet the procedure indicated in these positions seems to be quite applicable, so long as we do not let ourselves be forced down a slippery slope (which can easily happen in this kind of game) but rather hold our ground by throwing into the balance all the tenacity we possess. If we do so, the future looks bright. We refer to the games Rubinstein won in this style at San Sebastian 1911 and Game 25 below. For now we proceed to Game 24.

Game 24

Siegbert Tarrasch
Jacques Mieses
Berlin 1916

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4

Giving up the center, but also opening the d-file and the b7-h1 diagonal for the sake of pressure on White’s center.

4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♗d3 ♘xe4

6…b6 would be more solid, but the text move is also playable.

7.♗xe4 ♘f6 8.♗d3

If 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♗xf6, the best reply is 9…gxf6.

8…b6 9.♗g5 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♕e2 0-0 12.♖ad1

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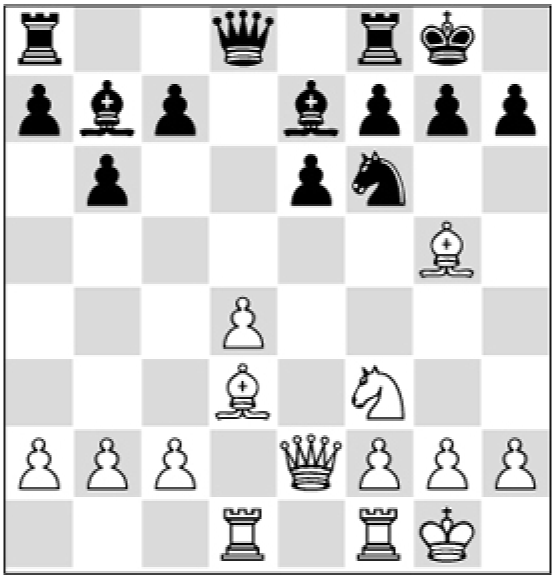

12…h6?

The tenacity so essential to tournament play is lacking on this occasion! Why not 12…♕d5? If 13.c4, then 13…♕a5 and perhaps …♖ad8, with pressure that is already palpable. If, however, 13.c4 ♕a5 14.d5, then 14…♖ae8! with strong counter-threats. For instance, 15.dxe6? ♗xf3 and …♕xg5. Why mere ‘contact’ with the point d5 is so beneficial is evident at once: the d5-point constitutes in the first place an outpost on the d-file, secondly a diagonal outpost on the b7-h1 diagonal, and lastly it is a blockade point. The enormous strategical significance of d5 make it clear that any, even the most fleeting, contact with it works wonders!

13.♝f4 ♛d5

Now this move is unfavorable, as the c7-pawn is hanging. The slippery slope now appears.

14.c4 ♛a5 15.♝xc7 ♝xf3

To be considered was 15…♖ac8 16.♗e5 ♖fd8, when the further march of the white pawn majority is very much hindered.

16.gxf3!

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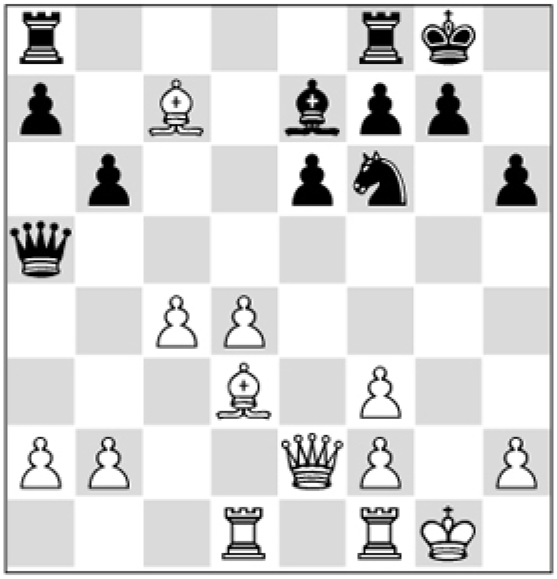

16…♛xa2?

Black refuses to reconcile himself to the loss of a pawn; at considerable risk he looks for compensation and in the process loses the queen. With 16…♖fc8 17.♗e5 ♘d7! (with a view to the threatened ♔h1 and ♖g1) he could still offer resistance. If now 18.♗e4, then 18…♘xe5 19.♗xa8 ♘g6!, when Black threatens …♘f4, with …♗d6 and …♕h5 possibly to follow.

17.♜a1 ♛b3 18.♝c2 ♛b4 19.♜a4

and Black resigned. A nice trapping of the queen.

In a situation very similar to that in the previous game, Tartakower succeeds in making the d5-point, which Mieses so badly neglected, the base of an action that he carries out with great virtuosity.

Game 25

Ernst Grünfeld
Savielly Tartakower
Semmering 1926

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♗g4 4.♘e5 ♗h5 5.♘xc4

On 5.♘c3 Black does best to play 5…♘d7, when the proud knight on e5 is forced to declare its intentions.

5…e6 6.♕b3

Threatening both 7.♕xb7 and 7.♕b5+.

6…♘c6 7.e3 ♖b8!

He does not shrink from using the rook to defend the humble pawn!

8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.♗e2 ♗xe2 10.♘xe2 ♗b4+ 11.♘c3 0-0

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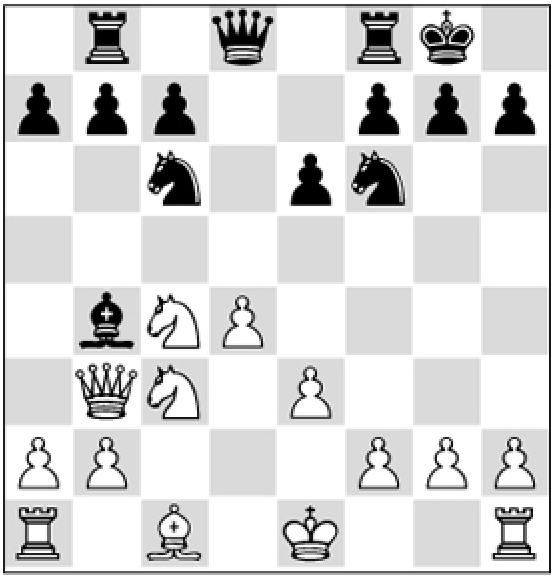

Now that both sides have completed their development the game is approximately level. But White’s center betrays a noticeable degree of immobility, even though it is otherwise well-protected. However, my system teaches that every immobile complex tends to become weak. The truth of this proposition will be manifest before long.

12.0-0 ♘d5!

He feels right at home here, for 13.e4 is unfeasible because of the reply 13…♘xd4.

13.♘xd5

If 13.♘e4, there would follow the mobilization of the black queenside with 13…b5 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 c5 16.a3 c4, etc.; or 14.♘cd2 e5!, etc., wrecking White’s position.

13…♕xd5! 14.♕c2 e5!

The white center is already being rolled up.

15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♕xe5 17.♗d2 ♗xd2 18.♕xd2 ♖fd8 19.♕c2 ♖d5!

Making use of the d5-square in excellent fashion.

20.♖ad1 ♖bd8 21.♖xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖d1 g6 23.♖xd5 ♕xd5 24.a3 c5

Black has a pronounced endgame advantage: the pawn majority on the queenside, the d-file, and, last but not least, the centralized queen position. This advantage is, however, still very slight.

25.h3 b5 26.♕c3 c4 27.f4 ♕e4!

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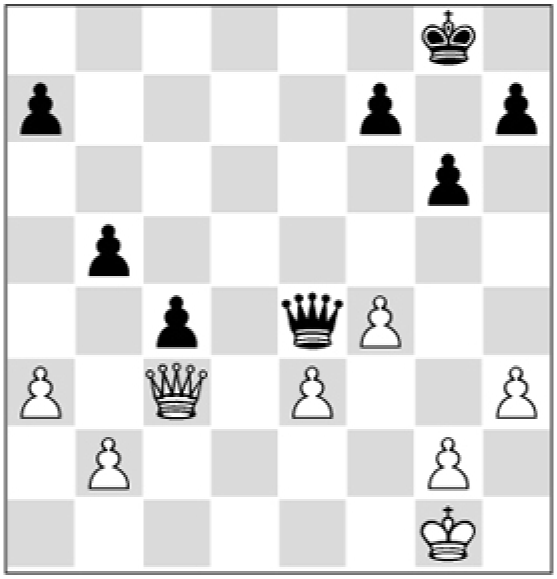

The centralization proceeds apace! White’s pawn majority is much less easily realizable than Black’s (on 26.f3, for instance, 26…f5 would have followed, with the e4-square placed under restraint). This explains why White loses the game.

28.♔f2 a5!

Tartakower plays the whole ending with wonderful precision and truly artistic subtlety. In my opinion, he is undoubtedly the third-best endgame player among all living masters.

29.g4 h6 30.h4 ♛h1!

Only now – and this slowness does him honor – does he give up the central position in favor of a diversion.

31.♚g3 ♛g1+ 32.♚f3 ♛h2 33.g5 h5 34.♚e4 ♛xh4 35.♛xa5 ♛h1+ 36.♚e5 ♛c6!

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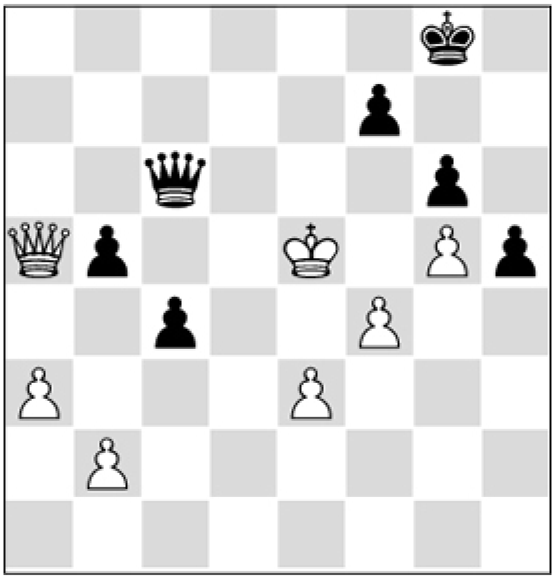

In order on 37.♕e1 to execute the following maneuver: 37…♕c5+ 38.♔e4 ♕f5+ and …♕c2, winning.

37.♛a7 h4 38.f5

In these last moves White is already down for the count.

38…gxf5 39.♚xf5 ♛f3+ 40.♚e5 h3 41.♚d4 ♛g4+

0-1

Game 26

Harry Kline
José Raúl Capablanca
New York 1913

This game illustrates the stratagem ‘central file vs. a flank attack’.

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 d6 3.c3 ♞bd7 4.♝f4 c6 5.♛c2 ♛c7 6.e4 e5 7.♝g3 ♝e7

White now has the attacking position in the center. This is unquestionably an advantage. Here, however, the weakness of his e4-square (we shall see presently why this square is weak) soon forces White to give up this so-called advantage. That is, he will find himself compelled to equalize the game with dxe5.

8.♗d3 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♖e8! 10.0-0 ♘h5

To trade off the bishop.

11.♘c4 ♗f6 12.♘e3 ♘f8 13.dxe5

Since the bishop at d3 is essential for the protection of e4, White can protect the d4-pawn against …♘e6 only through exchange. The student should pay careful attention to the motif in use here, forcing the opponent to declare himself (whether for dxe5 or d4-d5). In the next chapter we shall have occasion to make use of this motif.

13…dxe5 14.♗h4 ♕e7 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6?

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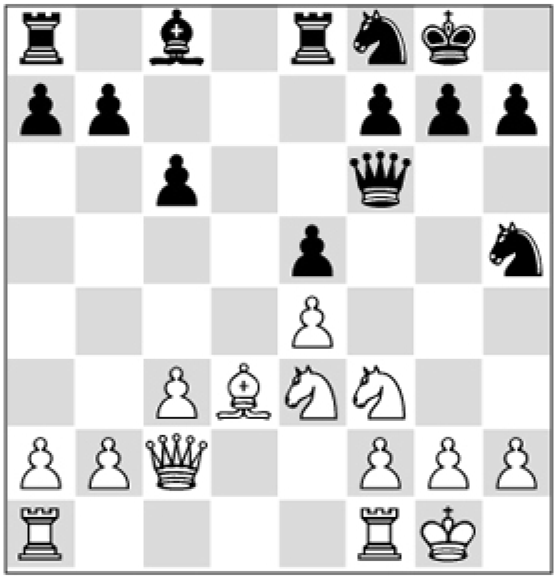

With this and the next move Black puts into play a diversion that may be said to run counter to the spirit of the opening. The sound line of play consisted of …♗e6 and the doubling of the rooks on the d-file, by which he would have taken advantage of the somewhat uncomfortable position of the bishop at d3. The simplest course would have been …♗e6 at the 14th move.

16.♘e1 ♘f4? 17.g3 ♘h3+ 18.♔h1 h5 19.♘3g2 g5 20.f3 ♘g6 21.♘e3 h4

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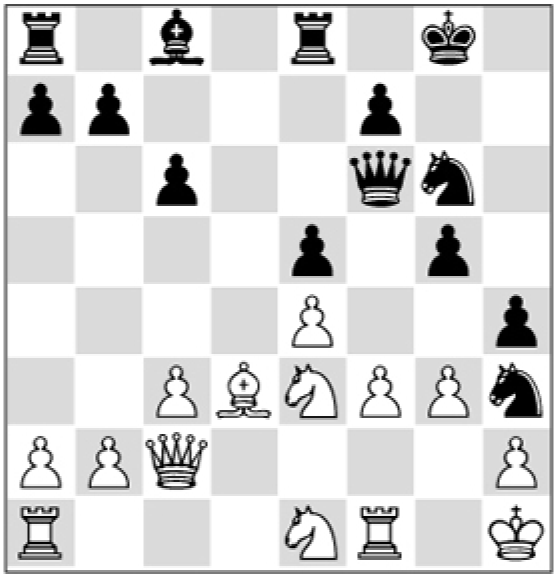

The h3-knight is cut off from retreat. The attempt to rescue it by the reckless advance of the kingside pawns gives the opportunity, often occurring in similar situations, for a decisive stroke, namely, a centralization (here ♘f5)

22.g4??

The entry of the knight with 22.♘f5 would, according to my analysis, have decided the game in favor of White. For example, 22.♘f5 hxg3 23.hxg3 ♗xf5 24.exf5 ♘e7 25.♔g2 ♔g7 (is the pawn sacrifice 25…g4 26.fxg4 ♘g4 any better?) 26.♔xh3 ♖h8+ (or 26…♘d5 27.♕e2) 27.♔g2 ♕h6 28.♔f2 ♕h2+ 29.♘g2 ♖h3 30.♔e1 ♖xg3 31.♘e3. Incidentally, on top of that, 26.♖h1 is playable, which I (in the *Rigaer Rundschau*) also showed to be a win for White.

22…♞hf4

Now the knight rejoices in his re-discovered freedom, and, after this dubious excursion, which could easily have ended up fatally for him, Black embarks on the correct line of play, along the d-file, which he utilizes in masterful fashion all the way to victory. The rest needs little explanation. There followed:

23.♜f2 ♞xd3 24.♞xd3 ♝e6 25.♜d1 ♜ed8 26.b3 ♞f4 27.♞g2 ♞xd3 28.♜xd3 ♜xd3 29.♛xd3 ♜d8

Why not 29…♗xg4?

30.♛e2 h3 31.♞e3 a5! 32.♜f1 a4 33.c4 ♜d4 34.♞c2 ♜d7 35.♞e3 ♛d8 36.♜d1 ♜xd1+ 37.♞xd1 ♛d4

The d-file and centralization.

38.♞f2 b5! 39.cxb5 axb3 40.axb3 ♝xb3 41.♞xh3 ♝d1 42.♛f1 cxb5 43.♚g2 b4 44.♛b5 b3 45.♛e8+ ♚g7 46.♛e7 b2 47.♞xg5 ♝b3 48.♞xf7 ♝xf7 49.♛g5+ ♚f8 50.♛h6+ ♚e7 51.♛g5+ ♚e8

0-1

Game 27

Akiba Rubinstein
Grigory Levenfish
Karlsbad 1911

This game illustrates the plan of action: play along a file against an enemy pawn center. Motto: First restrain, then blockade, and finally destroy!

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♝g5 ♝e7 5.e5 ♞fd7 6.♝xe7 ♛xe7 7.♛d2 0-0 8.f4 c5 9.♞f3 f6

More in the spirit of a correct attack on a pawn chain was, first, the exchange 9…cxd4 10.♘xd4 and only then 10…f6. But after 11.exf6 ♕xf6 the position arrived at is similar to that in the game.

10.exf6 ♛xf6 11.g3 ♞c6 12.0-0-0 a6 13.♝g2 ♞b6

The attacking line along the diagonal g2-d5 is a necessary component in White’s attacking scheme. In particular, his diagonal prevents (after Black’s …cxd4) the freeing advance …e6-e5 more thoroughly than any other deployment could.

14.♜he1 ♞c4 15.♛f2 b5

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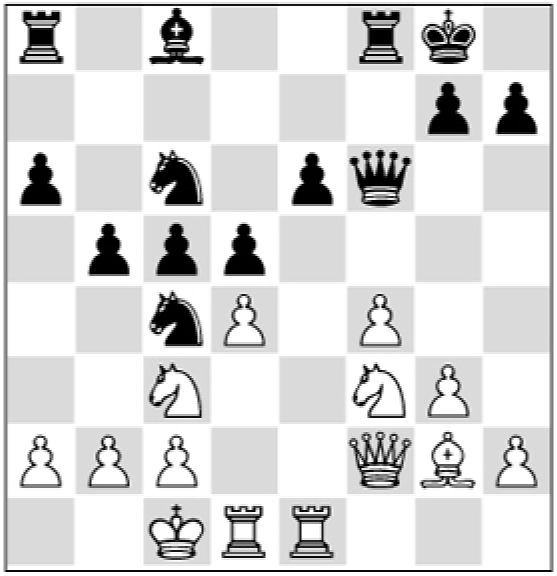

16.dxc5!

Bravo! He is not afraid of the flank attack …♘xb2, for a strongly centralized game is never slain by a flank attack alone! And White’s game is centralized, since he has control of the central files, whose restraining pressure is already making itself felt. And further, he has the prospect of occupying the central squares d4 and e5. Note how Black’s flank attack is repelled by White’s action in the center!

16…♘xb2 17.♔xb2 b4 18.♘d4! bxc3+ 19.♔a1

Consumption of the c3-pawn is being reserved for a rook.

19…♘xd4

On 19…♗d7 White would play 20.♘xe6 ♗xe6 21.♖xe6 and ♗xd5.

20.♕xd4 ♖b8 21.♖e3 g5

Now he tries the other wing.

22.♖xc3 gxf4 23.gxf4 ♗d7 24.c6 ♕xd4 25.♖xd4 ♗e8 26.♗h3 ♖f6

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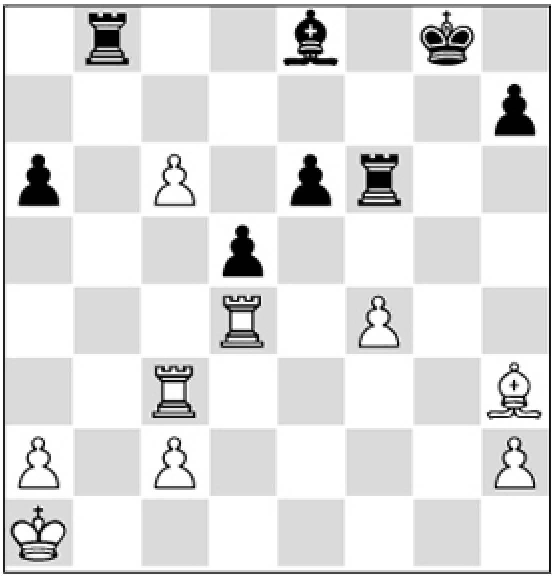

27.c7

I should have preferred the game to be decided by a bishop ending and not through the rather ‘tacked on’ action of the passed pawn at c7. For an example of such an ending, see Diagram 377.

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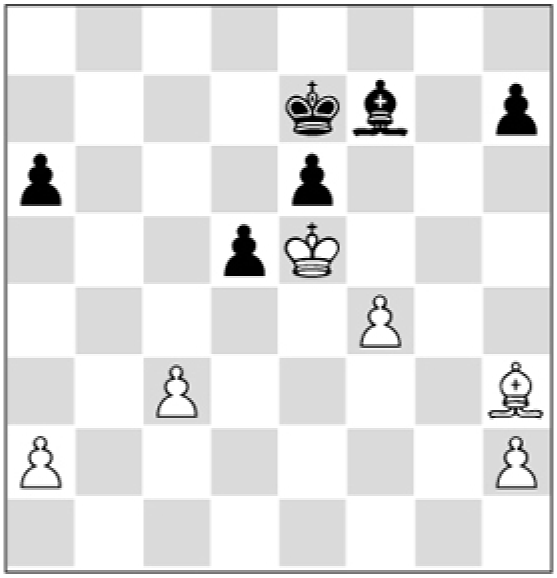

(analysis)

The game continues f4-f5 exf5; ♗xf5, when White wins the d-pawn and the game. In this way the idea of restraining, blockading, and only then destroying the pawns (at d5 and e6) would stand in sharper relief.

But the way the actual game was played was instructive enough! (Cf. White’s 13th, 16th, and 18th moves.)

27…♖c8 28.♖xd5 ♖xc7 29.♗xe6+

Black resigned.

Ways to acquire a sense of positional play

(a little schema for Chapter 10)

1. Resist the false assumption that every move has to have a direct effect. Waiting moves and quiet moves also have their right to exist!
2. Recognize that *prophylaxis* is the principal idea behind positional play. To this purpose we fight against freeing moves and thereby prevent an inner disorganization of one’s position by bringing his own pieces in contact with (his own) strategically important points!
3. We should have a fiendish respect for *central strategy*, avoiding every premature diversion toward the wings (out of fear of an enemy central invasion) and looking instead to operate under the banner of centralization!
4. We should play for the *collective mobility* of our own pawn mass and not for the mobility of each individual pawn in and of itself!
5. We should become accustomed to regarding control of the center as a ‘question of restraint’ and not as an arithmetic completeness of the center pawns.
6. Not attack nor defense but only *consolidation* is characteristic of positional play.

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Chapter 11

The Doubled Pawn and Restraint

1. The affinity between the ‘doubled pawn’ and ‘restraint’. The former facilitates the execution of enemy plans for restraint. What does it mean to suffer under the disadvantage of a doubled pawn? The concept of the passive (static) and active (dynamic) weakness. When does the dissolution of the enemy doubled pawn seem to be indicated? The (only) real strength of the doubled pawn is defined more precisely.

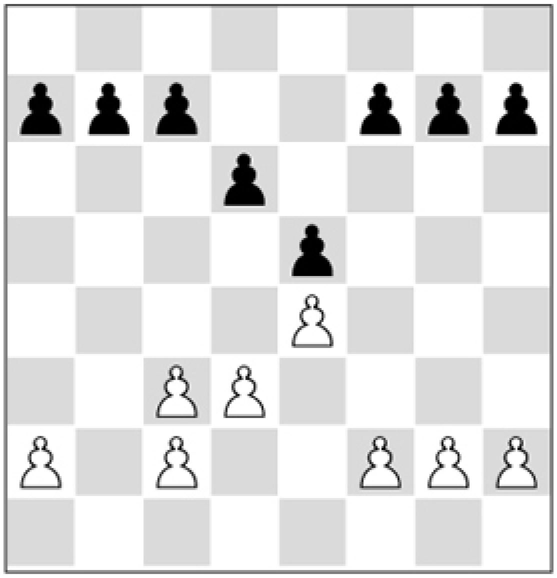
Restraint is conceivable even without the presence of an enemy doubled pawn; but a really complete restraint, which extends over a large part of the board and which results in ‘breathing difficulties’, is possible only when the opponent is suffering under the disadvantage of a doubled pawn.

In what way, we now ask, does someone *suffer* under this disadvantage? By the fact that in the endgame an isolated doubled pawn can be won with little difficulty, or the fact that such a doublet at the very least imposes a highly unpleasant duty to defend the pawns. But these instances do not quite exhaust the problem raised by the doubled pawn. For we can assume the suffering to also be involved when we are dealing with a doubled pawn that is *compact*, that is, one that is easy to defend.

We call a doubled pawn compact when it is associated with an adjacent pawn mass.

(See Diagram 378.)

378



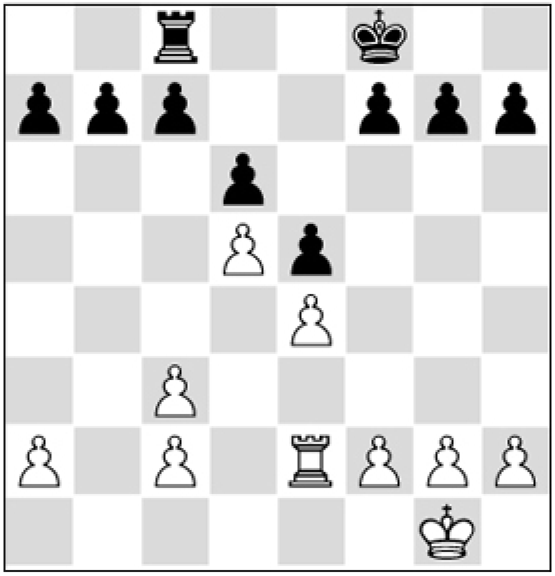
Schema: after White plays d3-d4, the further advances d4-d5 and c3-c4-c5 can be stopped by …b7-b6, which would not be the case if White's b-pawn were present

The suffering would be slight also in the case of the evil of an aggravated formation of a passed pawn (e.g., with white pawns at a2, b2, c2, and c3, and black pawns on a7, b7, and c7). The suffering is chiefly to be found in the case of a 'cohesive' advance, in which certain paralysing phenomena may become possible. See Diagram 378. With the pawn at b2 instead of c3, the cohesive advance d3-d4-d5 followed by c3-c4, b2-b4, and c4-c5 would be possible. But in the diagram position it is precisely our b-pawn that is missing, hence our attempt at a transference (see the chapter on the pawn chain) is ineffectual: on d3-d4-d5 followed by c3-c4, Black plays …b7-b6, when c4-c5 proves to be completely unfeasible. What we have just learned about the principal weakness of the compact doubled pawn (which we would class as an active, or dynamic, weakness) enables us to formulate the following rule, that it pays to induce the possessor of a pawn mass, whose attacking value is reduced by the presence of doubled pawns, to advance his pawns.

To this purpose, Black, in the position under consideration, must, if White has played d3-d4, try to induce his opponent to proceed with his action in the center. So long as White holds up his pawn at d4 the flaw of the doubled pawn will be as noticeable as a limp in the case of a man… sitting down. It is only through a further advance that the weakness becomes apparent.

We must distinguish between the ‘active’ weakness and a ‘passive’, ‘static’ weakness. The latter, in contrast to the example in Diagram 378, is revealed at that moment when we ‘let loose’ against the doubled pawn, i.e., sending our own pawns in a storm against the doubled pawns. Let us imagine Diagram 378 with White’s d-pawn at d5 rather than on d3, and with a king on g1 and rook on e2, Black’s rook placed on c8 and his king at f8 (Diagram 379).

379



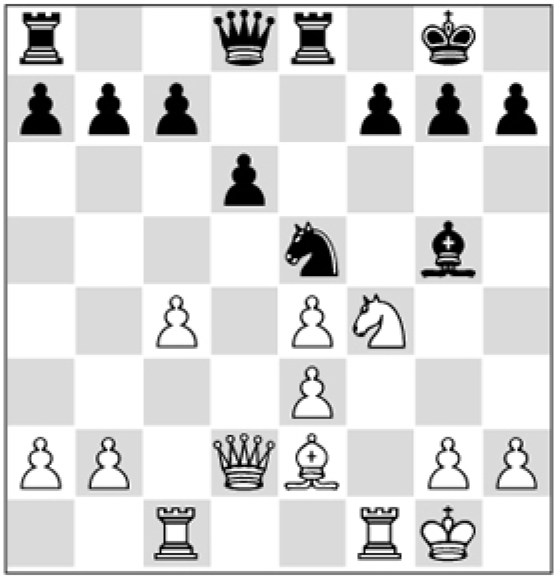
Here the static weakness of the doubled pawn is considerable, for after either 1…c6 2.dxc6 ♖xc6 or 1…c6 2.c4 cxd5 3.cxd5 ♖c3 followed by …♖a3, Black has the advantage.

RULE: **In the case of the passive weakness in doubled pawns, an advance against these pawns is indicated, whereby the dissolution of the enemy doubled pawns is by no means to be feared.**

The evil disappears only by half – part of the nice cloverleaf ‘evaporates’, true enough, but the part that remains behind will have to suffer all the more heavily.

Consider Diagram 380.

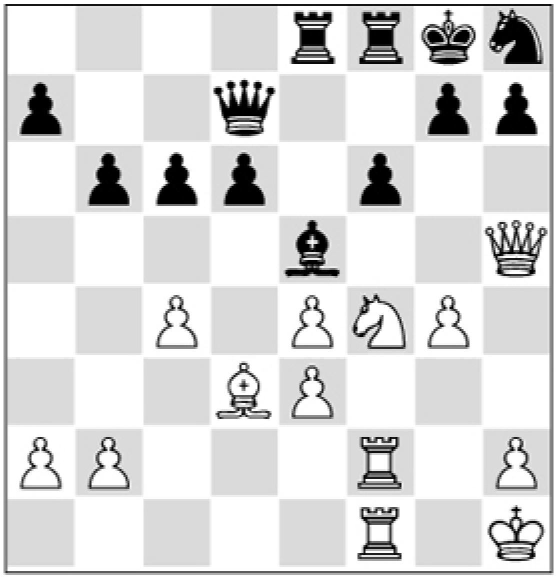
380



The indirect exchange of the d6-pawn for the e4-pawn strikes Black as worth striving for. How should Black seek to bring this about?

Black, the author of this book, let his opponent (E.Cohn) have the initiative in the hope that this ‘play’ would eventually lead to a simplification, after which it would not be all that difficult to take advantage of the doubled pawns in the endgame phase: **16…♕d7 17.♕e1 ♘g6 18.♗d3 ♗f6 19.♕f2 ♗e5** Black relies on the strength of the e5-point. **20.♖c2 ♖f8 21.♔h1 b6 22.♕f3 ♖ae8 23.♖cf2 ♘h8 24.♕h5 c6 25.g4 f6**

381



And now Cohn let himself be carried away by an interesting attack, which however in the end only served to simplify the game and make clear the hopelessness of the pawn position at e3 and e4. He played **26.c5**. After **26…♗xf4 27.♖xf4 dxc5 28.♗c4+ ♘f7 29.g5 ♖e5 30.♖f5 ♖xf5 31.exf5** (Diagram 382)

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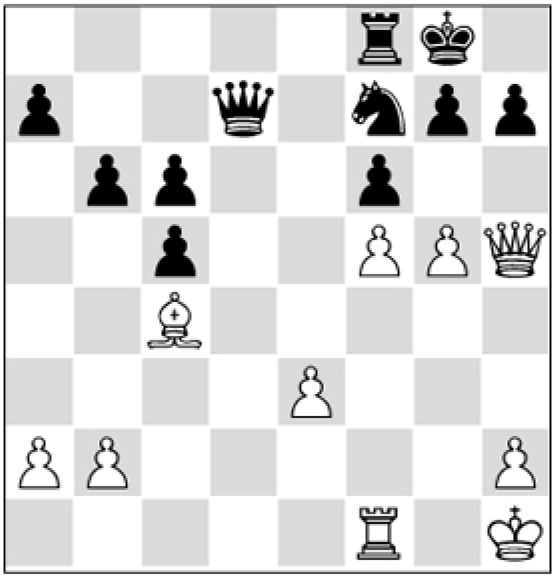
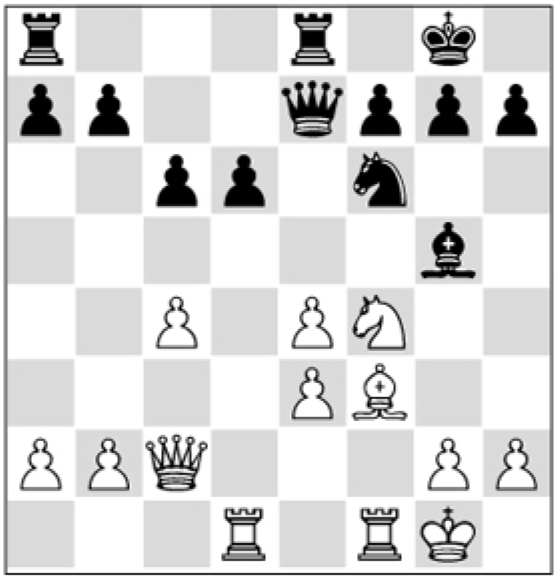


the win could have been forced by **31…♔h8**; on 32.g6, Black would play 32…♘h6, and if 32.♗xf7 there would follow 32…♕xf7 33.g6 ♕d5+ and …h7-h6.

Black was therefore correct in choosing a waiting strategy: the flank attack had to fail against the center file and Black’s strong point at e5, and the ending is hopeless for White. (A game to be recommended to the student as an example, in the case of a doubled pawn, of ‘letting one’s opponent have the play’.)

Even so, in Diagram 380 an ‘advance’ was also possible, for the e3/e4 pair constitutes in this position a passive weakness. The indicated advance I have in mind might be carried out as follows (see Diagram 380): 16…♘d7 (instead of 16…♕d7) 17.♗f3 ♘f6 18.♕c2 c6!. He ‘sacrifices’ the d-pawn in order to get the e4-pawn for it – an exchange carried out from d6 against e4. As a result, this line of play would correspond to the advance …d6-d5 followed by …dxe4. After 19.♖cd1 ♕e7 (Diagram 383) we are at the point of our ‘exchange’, after which the e3-pawn can easily be shot at.

383



Black trades d6 for e4 in order afterwards to besiege e3

The *principal RULE*:

To isolated doubled pawns, and further to ‘compact’ doubled pawns, or to doubled pawns on the march, the ‘question’ should be put (to be attacked by pawns). On the other hand, an enemy doubled pawn complex that has not yet started its advance should, before the question is put to it, be incited to action. First let it sow its wild oats!

1a. The one real strength of the doubled pawn

As we have seen, a pawn mass afflicted with a doubled pawn has within it a certain latent weakness that makes itself felt when the time comes to make use of that mass by advancing it. We denote this situation, as we have said, as a dynamic weakness. On the other hand, this pawn mass at rest (remaining where it is) is quite strong. Look back, for example, at Diagram 378. After d3-d4 a position is reached from which White can be dislodged only with the greatest difficulty. We mean by this that Black hardly has sufficiently great positional means at his disposal to force his opponent to decide on dxe5 or d4-d5; this would in fact be more likely with the pawn at b2 instead of c2. The doubling of the pawn even makes holding out easier!

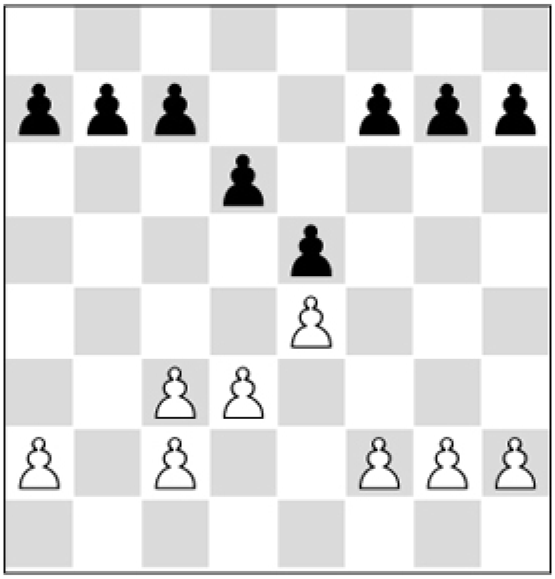
Why this should be so is difficult to explain. Perhaps it is a matter of an equalizing justice, an attempt to compensate for the dynamic weakness by static strength. Or perhaps it is because the open b-file plays a role. In any event, experience has shown that the doubled pawn (the c-pawn, in our example) facilitates holding out.

In this ability to hold out we see the one real strength of the doubled pawn; cf. the game Hakansson-Nimzowitsch in the next section and also my games vs. Johner (Game 30) and Rosselli (in the next section and Game 29).

2. The most-familiar doubled pawn complexes are passed in review(for short double-complexes). The double-complex as an instrument of attack.

(a) See again Diagram 378 (reproduced below).

378



(reproduced)

The strongest formation for White is the one that is reached after d3-d4; this formation should be maintained for as long as possible. After d4-d5 has been played, however, White’s weakness will be palpable. Hence it is a strategic necessity for Black to force d4-d5 and, where possible, without the aid of …c7-c5. For after …c7-c5; d4-d5 the possibility of putting the question (with …c7-c6) will not be available, nor will the opportunity to occupy c5 with a knight.

In Diagram 378, many chess friends, as Black, commit the mistake of ‘letting loose’ at once with …d6-d5. This contradicts our principal rule (see above), by which the enemy doubled-pawn complex should first be incited to advance. By this and only by this does the active (dynamic) weakness of the doubled-pawn complex let itself be exploited.

The following examples should serve to elucidate the struggle between the defender under siege, who is trying to hold on, and his opposite number, who is trying to force a ‘decision’ on the part of the defender. First, we give an example of a defender who, with a single thoughtless move, gives away all his trumps.

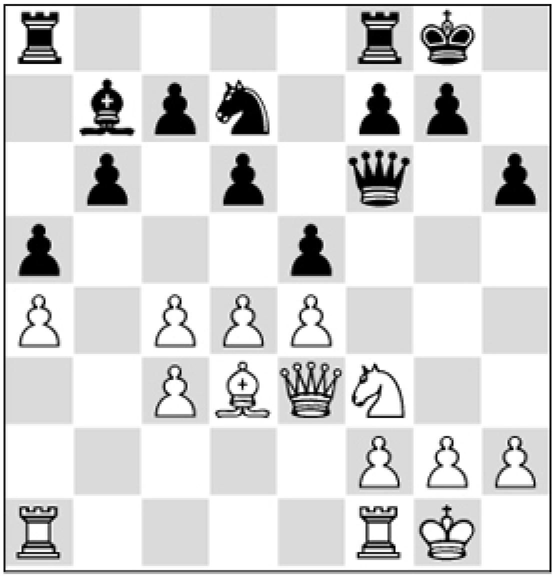
A.Hakansson-Nimzowitsch

Played in 1921

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.e4 ♗b7 7.♘c3 ♗b4 8.♕d3 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 d6 Now …e6-e5 will follow shortly, and we will have the doubled-pawn complex we have been discussing. **10.♕e3 ♘d7 11.♗d3 e5 12.0-0 0-0 13.a4 a5**

See Diagram 384.

384

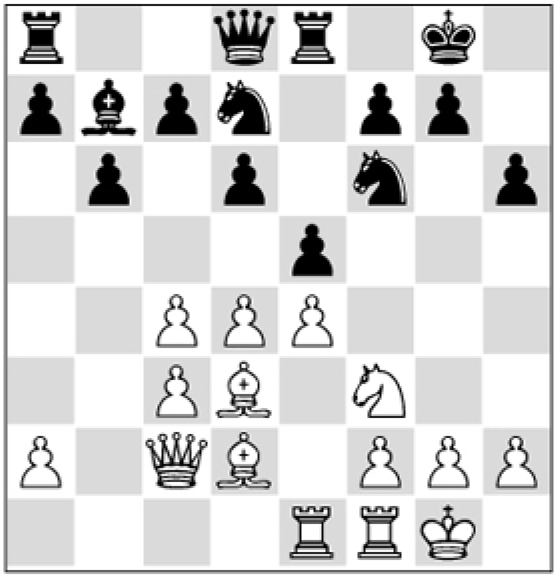


14.♘e1 White stood well, for it is improbable that Black would have been able to force him to a decision (d4-d5). The somewhat heavyfooted text move, however, creates difficulties in his own camp. Correct was 14.♘d2 followed by f2-f3; his queen, which is a bit exposed on e3, could then draw back to f2, when nothing would stand in the way of simply maintaining his position. After 14.♘e1?, however, Black played **14…♖ae8! 15.f3 ♕e6!** And now White really ought to have bitten into the sour apple and played d4-d5; instead, he preferred **16.♘c2**, and after **16…exd4! 17.cxd4 f5! 18.d5 ♕e5 19.♕d4 ♘c5 20.♖fd1 fxe4 21.fxe4 ♘xd3 22.♖xd3 ♕xe4** he lost a pawn and the game.

The next example is of a much heavier caliber.

D.Janowsky-Nimzowitsch
St. Petersburg 1914
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 b6 5.♗d3 ♗b7 6.♘f3 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 d6 8.♕c2 ♘bd7 9.e4 e5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗d2 ♖e8 13.♖ae1
Black was now confronted with the difficult problem of provoking his opponent to an action in the center.
See Diagram 385.

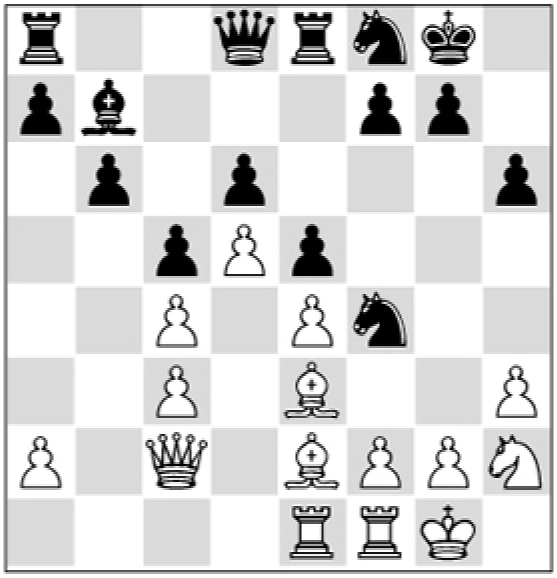
385



Janowsky-Nimzowitsch, St. Petersburg 1914
Black, to move, fights against White’s ‘holding on’

He tried to solve this problem through the maneuver …♘h7-f8-e6. Also possible, however, was 13…♘f8; e.g., 14.h3 ♘g6 15.♘h2 ♖e7!, and if now 16.f4, then 16…exf4 17.♗xf4 ♕e8, when White has no comfortable way to protect e4. But in the game, as indicated, **13…♞h7** was played: **14.h3 ♞hf8 15.♞h2 ♞e6 16.♝e3!** He ‘holds on’. **16…c5!** Because he sees no other way of breaking his opponent’s obstinacy. **17.d5 ♞f4! 18.♝e2 ♞f8** Diagram 386.

386



The c4-pawn and the point at f4 offer Black some chances of mounting a combined attack on both wings.

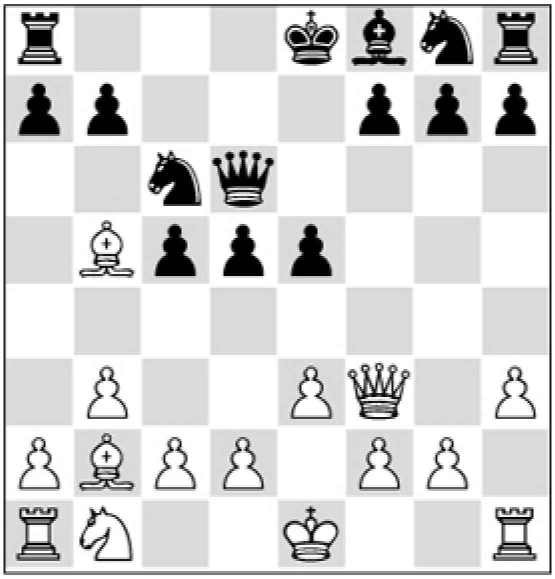
Since, as we have seen, it is often very difficult to induce an opponent who is holding on (in the ‘frog position’) to commit to an action in our sense, so it is obvious that we should bring about an enemy doubled-pawn complex only when we can reasonably expect to draw him out of it. In this sense the following game beginning is extremely instructive.

Nimzowitsch-S.Rosselli

Baden-Baden 1925

Already after the first seven moves **1.♞f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 ♞c6 4.♝b2 ♝g4? 5.h3! ♝xf3 6.♛xf3 e5 7.♝b5 ♛d6** Diagram 387.

387



Nimzowitsch-Rosselli, Baden-Baden 1925
White, on the move, renounces the possibility of creating a doubled-pawn complex (by 8.♗xc6+) because he recognizes the impossibility of inducing his opponent to play …d5-d4. On e3-e4, after a previous ♗xc6+ bxc6, Black’s d-pawn just stays where it is!

White had the opportunity to give his opponent a doubled pawn; e.g., 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.e4. But what would he have gained by this? How would Black prove able to force d4-d5? White therefore played **8.e4!**, renouncing the idea for the time being. **8…d4** And now that …d5-d4 has been played, the doubled-pawn complex is an objective most dearly to be wished for. In this vein, White played **9.♞a3** Threatening 10.♘c4 ♕c7 11.♗xc6+ bxc6. **9…f6! 10.♞c4 ♛d7 11.♛h5+ g6 12.♛f3 ♛c7** If 12…0-0-0, then 13.♘a5 ♘e7 14.♕xf6. **13.♛g4** and the diagonal g4-d7 soon led to Black’s resigning himself to accepting the doubled pawns in order to spare himself other unpleasantnesses. The full score, with detailed notes, can be found in Game 29 at the end of this chapter.

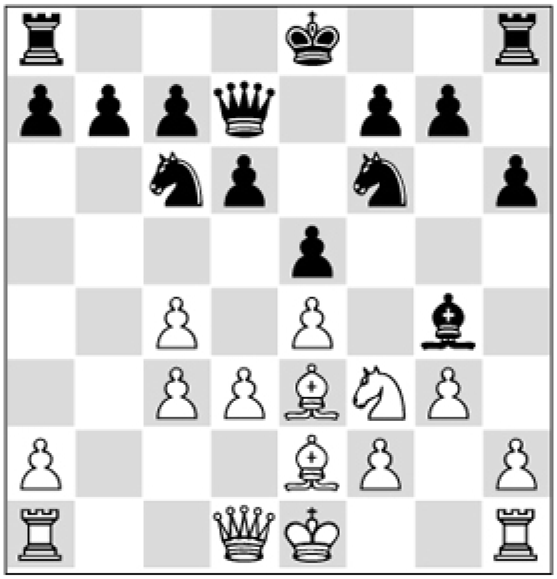
The side that is ‘holding on’ has to reckon with the fact that the mobility of his pawn complex is very limited, hence he must also adapt the movements of his pieces to this circumstance. These movements are slight and subtle – on both sides of the complex. What we mean by this will be made clear in the following example.

Nimzowitsch-F.Sämisch

Dresden 1926

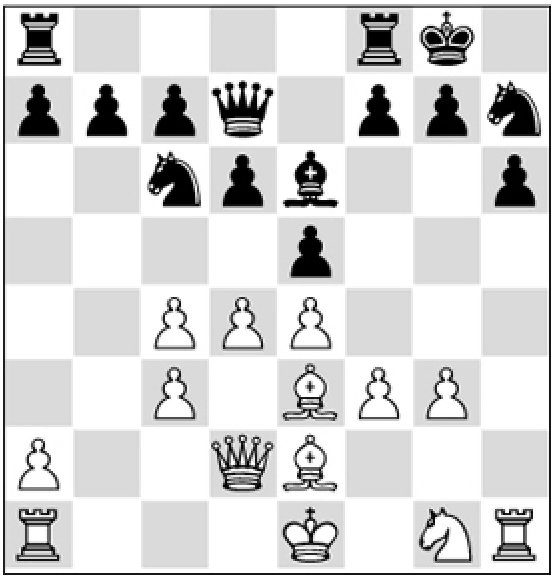
After **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4 ♗b4 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♗g4 7.♗e2 h6 8.♗e3 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕d7**

388



White was fully aware of the dynamic weakness of his ‘double-complex’, so his plan from this point was to let the d-pawn hold firm at d3, or at most at d4. Observe the little, subtle moves made by the white pieces that suit the conditions created by the central pawn configuration; for with only meager working capital (the slight mobility of White’s pawns) the greatest economy is necessary. There followed: **10.♕c2! 0-0 11.♕d2!** On the immediate 10.♕d2, 10…0-0-0 would have followed, when the white queen would be as ineptly placed as she could be. After 10.♕c2, on the other hand, 10…0-0-0 would be answered by 11.0-0 followed by ♖fb1, when White’s pieces would be interacting very nicely, not least because of the queen’s placement at c2. **11…♘h7 12.h3! ♗xh3 13.♘g1! ♗g4 14.f3 ♗e6 15.d4**

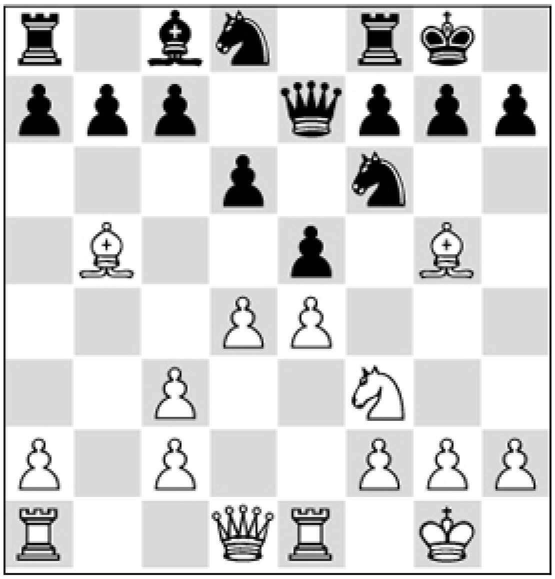
389



And White won a piece and the game.

We have submitted the doubled-pawn complex to a deep-level analysis. In the light of this examination many everyday events appear in a new aspect: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞c6 3.♘c3 ♞f6 4.♗b5 ♝b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♗g5 ♝xc3 8.bxc3 ♛e7 9.♖e1 ♞d8 10.d4** (Diagram 390)

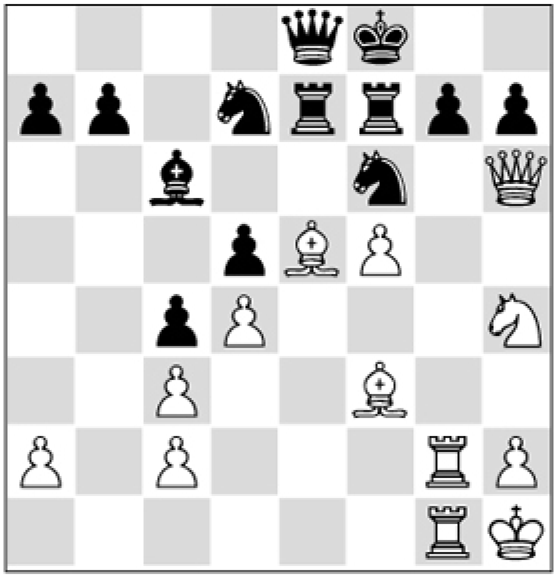
390



White’s attacking position in the center is intended, inter alia, to help conceal his own dynamic weakness (c2, c3), which, after d4-d5, would become immediately apparent. Hence the ‘attacking position’ before us is really to be seen as a hunkering-down, a ‘frog position’

White has an attacking position in the center, so says the prevailing view. This is incorrect, in my opinion. With the pawn at b2 instead of c2 this would actually be the case, but here the apparent attacking position of the d4-pawn has as its sole, deep purpose to cover over White’s weakness at c2/c3. After a d4-d5 advance, this (dynamic) weakness would be clear to the eye. Hence the position with pawns at c2, c3, d4, and e4 vs. e5, d6, c7, b7, and a7 (as in Diagram 390) would, for the deeper thinker, constitute a ‘frog position’. There followed **10…♘e6 11.♗c1 c6** Here 11…c5! was correct; e.g., 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘xe5? ♘c7, etc. **12.♗f1 ♖d8 13.g3 ♕c7 14.♘h4** White intends to play f2-f4. So, did White have the initiative in the center after all? No. The situation, rather, is this: since Black on his 11th move neglected to bother his opponent, White was able to build up an attacking formation out of his ‘frog position’, but originally it was in fact just such a crouching position. The play continued: **14…d5 15.f4! exf4 16.e5 ♘e4 17.gxf4 f5! 18.exf6! ♘xf6 19.f5 ♘f8 20.♕f3** and White won in magnificent style: **20…♕f7 21.♗d3 ♗d7 22.♗f4 ♖e8 23.♗e5 c5 24.♔h1 c4 25.♗e2 ♗c6 26.♕f4 ♘8d7 27.♗f3 ♖e7 28.♖e2 ♖f8 29.♖g1 ♕e8 30.♖eg2 ♖ff7 31.♕h6! ♔f8**

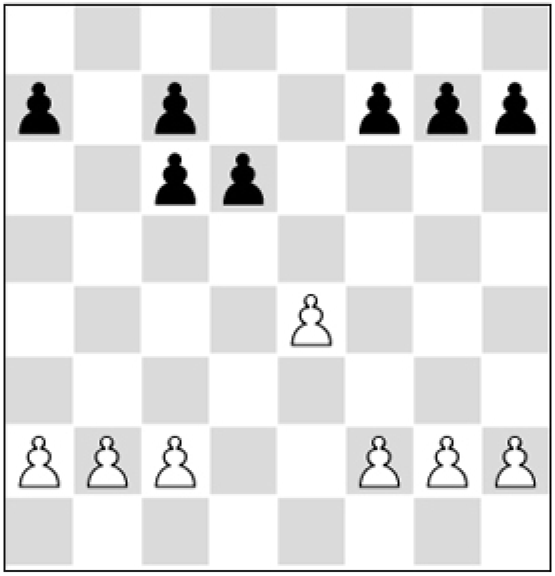
391



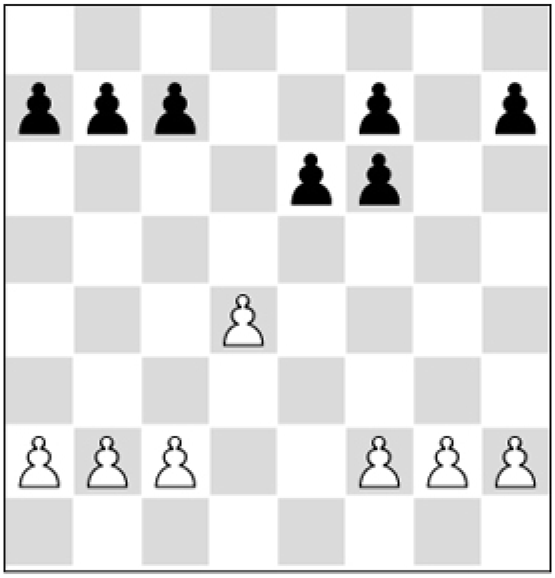
(we are following the excellent game Spielmann-Rubinstein, Karlsbad 1911) **32.♘g6+** A brilliant breakthrough combination. **32…hxg6 33.♕h8+ ♘g8 34.♗d6** Spielmann’s opponent, hemmed in and pinned down on all sides, has no way to counter an invasion into g8 via the g-file. **34…♕d8 35.♖xg6 ♘f6 36.♖xf6 ♖xf6 37.♖xg7!** and Black resigned.

We now proceed to a presentation of the next class of double-complex.
(b) See Diagrams 392 and 393.

392



393



The two diagrams have a similar sense in that Black, in his c6-pawn or f6-pawn, has compensation for the center that has been lost, for both these pawns have an influence that operates toward the center. This effect on the center finds expression in the fact that White (in Diagram 393) cannot establish an outpost on e5. Moreover, Black threatens …e6-e5, as well as …f6-f5 followed by …♖g8; then, in response to g2-g3, he has …h7-h5, …f5-f4, and …h5-h4. In other words, the pawn mass at e6, f7, and f6, which at first is defensive in nature, can unfold and be sent into the attack.

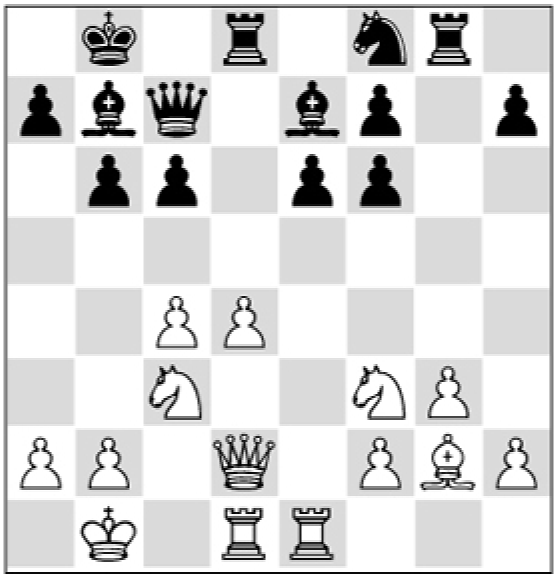
The weakness lies in the isolated pawn at h7. White will seek to counter the attacking diversion just indicated – …♖g8, …f6-f5, …h7-h5, etc. – by posting his pawns on f4, g3, and h2, followed at some point by ♘f3 and ♗g2. The game would then be level. It is, however, exceedingly difficult for Black to choose the suitable moment to emerge from his defensive posture with …f6-f5.

We offer the following examples.

Nimzowitsch-J.Perlis, Ostend 1907

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♗e7 6.♗xf6 gxf6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.♕d2 ♖g8 This could perhaps have been played later on. **9.0-0-0 ♘f8** Protecting the weakness, the isolated h7-pawn. **10.c4 c6 11.g3 ♕c7 12.♗g2 b6 13.♖he1 ♗b7 14.♔b1 0-0-0** Dr. Perlis has most skilfully made good use of the defensive strength of his ‘complex’. But soon he will see the right moment when he can let the doubled pawn come to the fore as an instrument of attack. **15.♘c3 ♔b8**

394



Black has used his pawn complex defensively. White’s outpost point (e5) cannot be realized

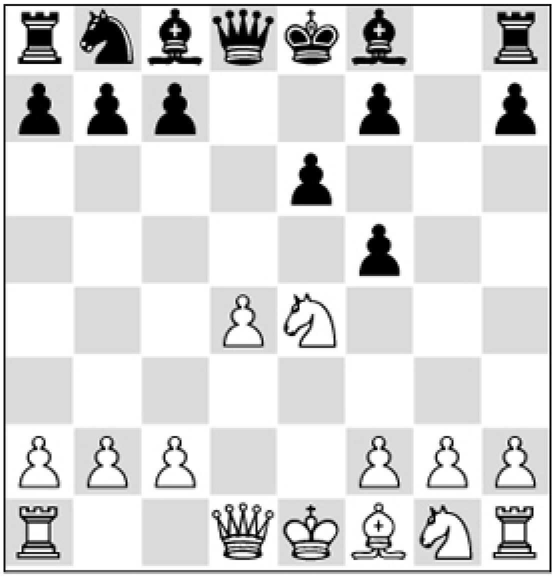
16.♕e3 The lack of an outpost on e5 is quite painful for White. **16…♘g6** Now Black is already threatening …f6-f5-f4, for the protection of e5 has now been taken over by the knight. **17.h4 f5 18.♘e5** At last! **18…f4! 19.♕f3 ♘xe5 20.dxe5 fxg3 21.fxg3 ♗b4** With an equal game. **22.a3 ♗xc3 23.♕xc3 c5 24.♗xb7 ♕xb7 25.♖d6 ♖xd6 26.exd6 ♖d8 27.♖d1 ♕e4+ 28.♔a2 ♖d7** and drawn on the 30th move. In this game, Dr. Perlis, an expert in such positions, took excellent advantage of his double-complex, both defensively and offensively.

The play was less convincing in the next game.

F.Yates-A.Olland, Scheveningen 1913

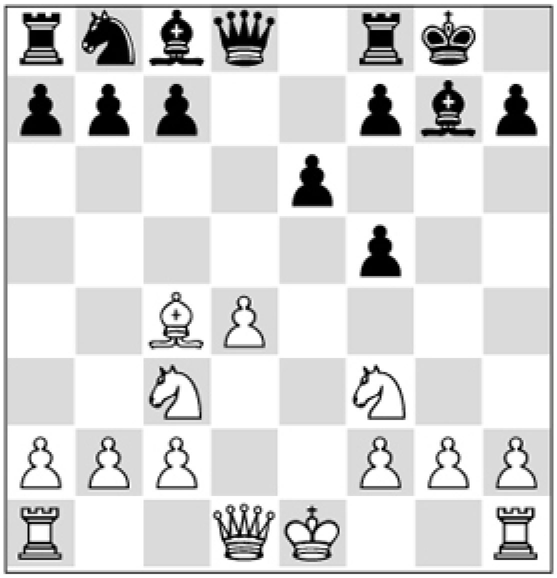
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 dxe4 5.♗xf6? Better, first, was 5.♘xe4. **5…gxf6 6.♘xe4 f5?** Diagram 395.

395



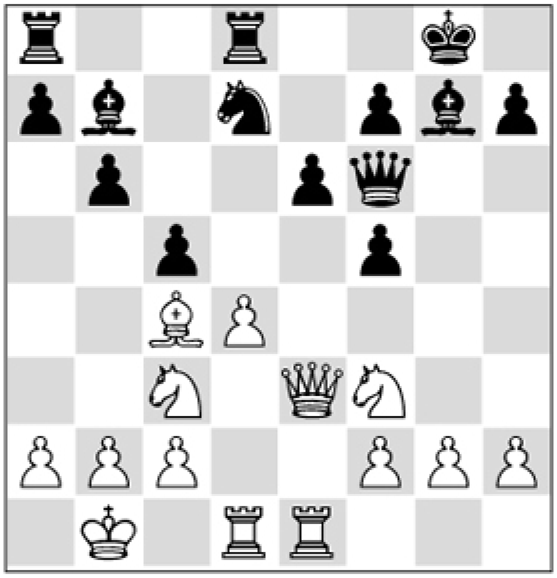
The moment for this advance strikes me as an unhappy one. The construction of the characteristic position (the pawn skeleton) with …b7-b6, …c7-c6, …♘d7, …♕c7, …♗b7, and …0-0-0, similar to what we saw in the previous game, is more in keeping with the nature of the position. **7.♘c3 ♗g7** This bishop now takes over the defense of e5, but the f6-pawn was a more reliable watchman. **8.♘f3 0-0** On 8…♘c6, which I recommended as better in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* (1913), 9.♗b5 0-0 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♕d3! ♖b8 12.0-0-0 could follow, when all Black’s attempts to get an attack would probably fail to the breakthrough possibility ♘e5; e.g., 12…♕e7 13.♘e5 ♕b4 14.b3, etc. **9.♗c4?** 9.♕d2 and 0-0-0 was the right idea here. Diagram 396.

396



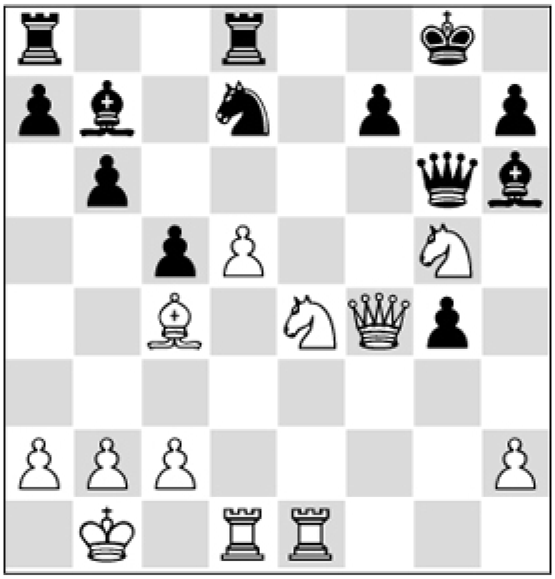
9…b6? 9…♘c6 10.♘e2 e5! 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 would have provided more scope for the bishops; e.g., 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.c3 ♗e6, when Black stands well. For us it was interesting to observe how the possibility …e6-e5 did after all come to fruition (cf. our introductory remarks on the complex under discussion). **10.♕d3 ♗b7 11.0-0-0 ♘d7 12.♖he1 ♕f6 13.♔b1 ♖fd8 14.♕e3 c5?** 14…c6 seems better, in order on the one hand to nail down White's d-pawn, and on the other to prepare a possible …b7-b5 and …♘b6.

397



The business with …f6-f5 has not proved successful, the pawn mass has not become an instrument of attack. On the contrary, the g2-g4 advance is already in the air. **15.d5 e5 16.g4** The game now leaves behind the realm of exact calculation. White should be satisfied with having obtained a passed pawn, and the appropriate strategy at this point would be a restraining maneuver against the pawn pair at e5 and f5, introduced perhaps by ♘d2 and f2-f3. Then White would not stand badly. **16…fxg4 17.♘g5 ♝h6 18.♘ce4 ♛g6 19.f4 exf4 20.♕xf4** (Diagram 398)

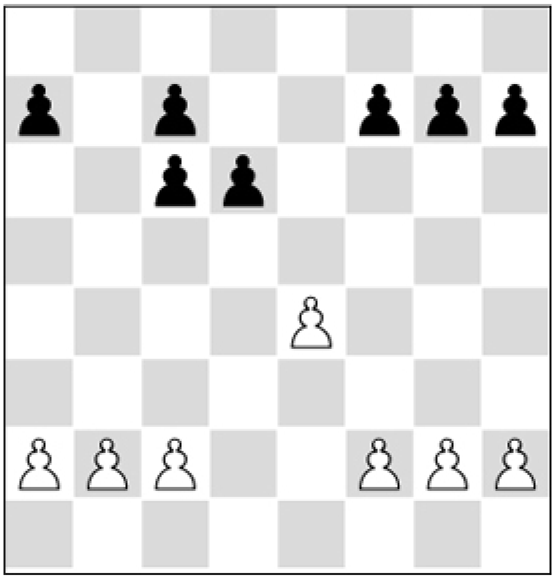
398



with enormous complications. After some further mistakes on the part of Black, White won on the 44th move.

In the game just given, Black’s double-complex never made itself felt as an instrument of attack. It is quite another matter in the following game, in which however we are dealing with the complex c7, c6, and d6 vs. e4 and c2 (Diagram 392, not Diagram 393).

392



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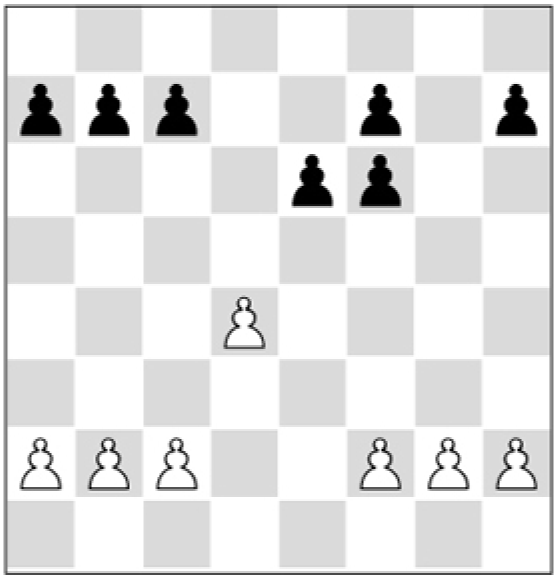
393



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We regard the pawn skeletons in Diagrams 392 and 393 as wholly identical in terms of their ‘living conditions’.

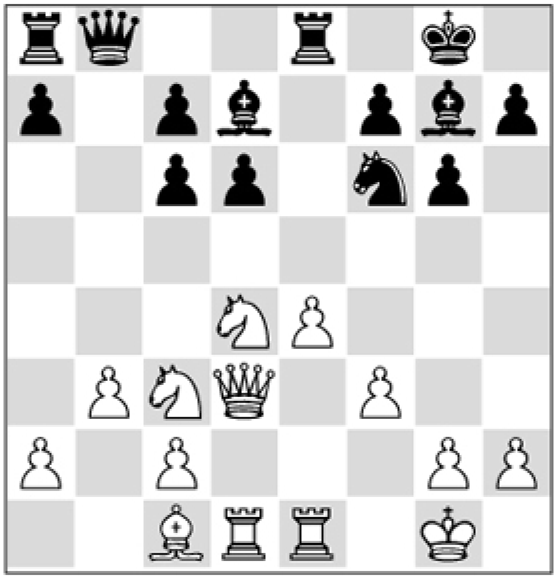
The *Double-Complex* in Diagram 392 as an *Instrument of Attack*

R.Teichmann-O.Bernstein

St. Petersburg 1909

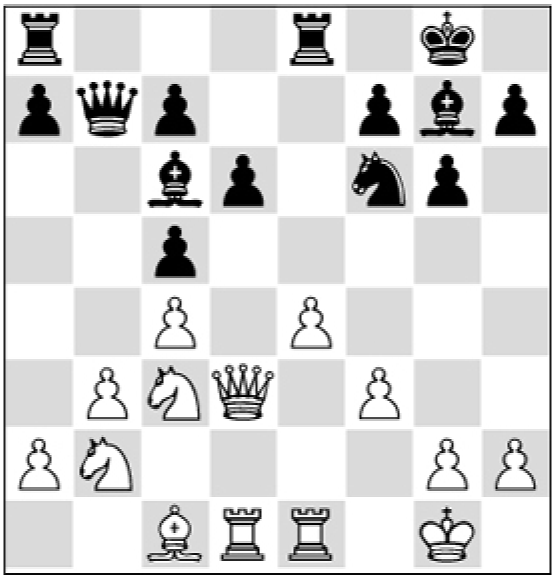
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 d6 5.d4 ♗d7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 exd4 8.♘xd4 0-0 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.b3 ♖e8 In addition to the problem of how to take proper advantage of the double-complex, Black also has to solve the problem of how to restrain the unfettered enemy center. **11.♗b2 ♗f8 12.♕d3 g6 13.♖ad1 ♗g7 14.f3** He forgoes the attempt by 14.f4 to establish aggressive activity in the center and strives instead for a secure and safe position. **14…♕b8** The final ‘piece preparations’ are made to see to it that …c6-c5 has a purposeful effect. **15.♗c1**

399



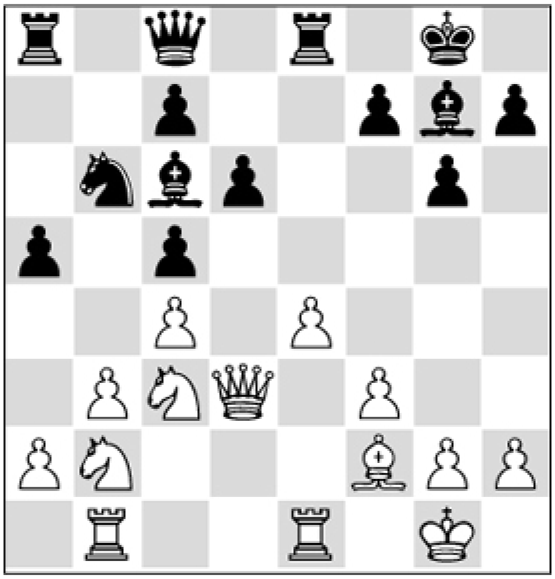
15…♕b6 Better was Lasker’s 15…a5 (threatening 16…a4!) 16.a4 (16.♘a4? c5) 16…c5 17.♘db5 ♗c6 and …♘d7, with a good position for Black. **16.♘a4 ♕b7 17.♘b2! c5 18.♘e2 ♗b5 19.c4 ♗c6 20.♘c3** Diagram 400.

400



The configuration with pawns on a4, b3, and c4 in such positions leaves a problem child at b3, thus depriving White of all winning chances. The build-up chosen in the game before us aims at preventing the …a5-a4 advance *without* relying on weakening pawn moves; Black would then be left with his own weakness at a7. **20…♘d7 21.♗e3 ♘b6 22.♖b1 a5 23.♗f2** Now 2**3…♕c8** should be played (Diagram 401), threatening …a5-a4.

401



Aggressive exploitation of the complex. White can after all establish the d5-outpost. Note too the appropriate configuration on each side for and against …a5-a4

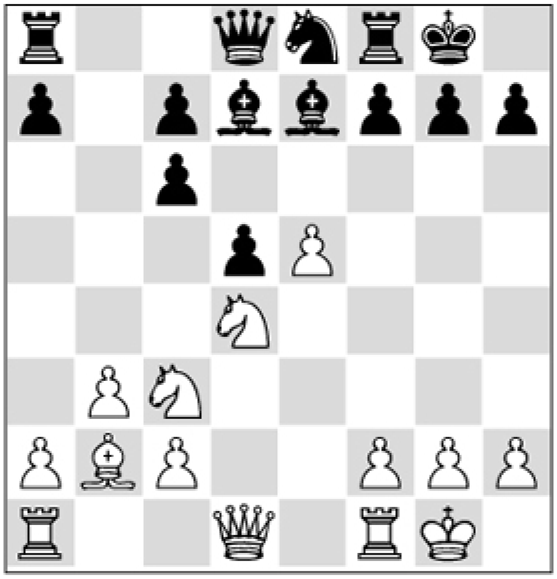
On 24.♘d5, 24…♘xd5 25.cxd5 ♗d7 and …a5-a4 would follow. It can hardly be said that White holds any trumps apart from ♘d5. The impression we get is that the …c6-c5 advance gives away the d5-square and must therefore be considered double-edged. But if the preconditions are satisfied, that is, if the e4-pawn is more or less kept under restraint and an effective counter to a possible ♘d5 has been prepared, then we may be justified in our …a5-a4 advance. The counter-formation chosen in this game, with White placing his pawns at c4, b3, and a2 and his knights on b2 and c3, we regard as sound, but we think the relative configurations of the pieces on each side make a win for White impossible. Games played in this manner, such as those in the match between Lasker and Schlechter, in practice always lead to a draw.

On the other hand, we consider the development …d6-d5 to be bad, for this may encourage sinister restraints. Very instructive in this regard is the following game.

M.Billecard-O.Bernstein, Ostend 1907

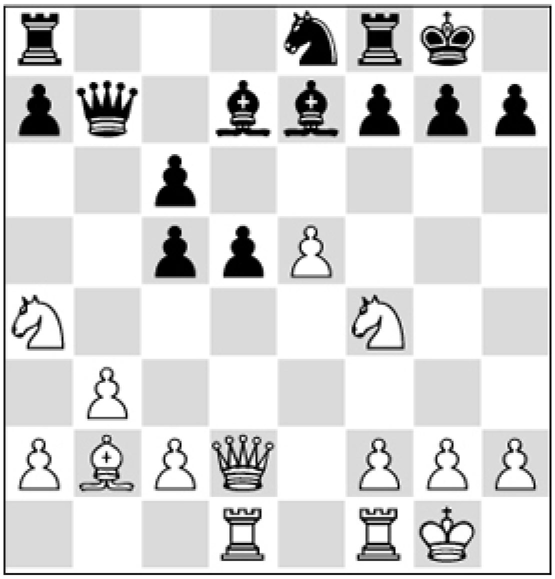
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 d6 5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 ♗d7 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2 d5 There followed **11.e5 ♘e8**

402



12.♕d2 White rightly thinks that by advancing, the black pawns will not in fact become stronger! **12…c5 13.♘de2 c6 14.♖ad1 ♕c7 15.♘f4 ♕b7** White threatened 16.♘xd5. **16.♘a4** Diagram 403.

403



This move initiates a blockade by occupying c5. Even more palpable for Black would be this occupation with his pawns at c7, c6, and d5; a knight on c5 would then exert a quite restraining effect. Incidentally, this game is intended to help bring home to us the affinity between the doubled pawn and restraint that we underscored at the beginning of this chapter. **16…c4 17.♗d4 cxb3 18.axb3?** More logical seems 18.cxb3. **18…♘c7 19.♘d3 ♘e6 20.♘dc5 ♕c7 21.♘xd7 ♕xd7 22.♕e3 ♘xd4 23.♕xd4 ♖ab8 24.♘c5 ♕f5 25.♘d3** White is in control of the c5-point. But had he played cxb3 on the 18th move, his pressure along the c-file would have been increased significantly. Hence, 10…d5 seems to be refuted.

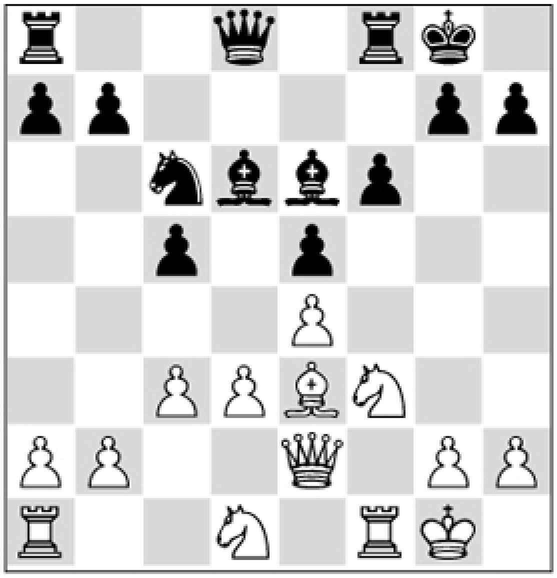
The student who is interested in the deeper logical connections will now say to himself, ‘How easy the pawn complex at c7, c6, and d5 must be to blockade! For Black succeeded in undoubling the pawns and White made a glaring mistake (18.axb3? instead of 18.cxb3!); and yet the mobility of Black’s pawns at c6 and d5 remained just as meager as before!’

This reckoning is in fact correct – the c7-c6-d5-complex is very susceptible to coming down with ‘blockade symptoms’. In other words, the affinity between the doubled pawn and the restraint to which we gave so much emphasis at the beginning of the chapter may at this point be accepted as quite probable. (See incidentally the game Leonhardt-Nimzowitsch in Chapter 4, Section 2a). As we proceed with our discussion, this probability may well solidify into a certainty.

3. Restraint. The ‘mysterious’ rook move. On genuine and illusory freeing moves and how we are to fight against them.

At a time when it was still the usual practice to come at me with a unified front for the purpose of provoking laughter at my ideas, there were a few critics here and there who took to derisively characterizing my rook moves as mysterious. One such rook move for example can be seen in Diagram 404.

404



Blackburne-Nimzowitsch
St. Petersburg 1914
Black makes the ‘mysterious’ rook move …♖e8. Here this is intended as a preventive measure against d3-d4

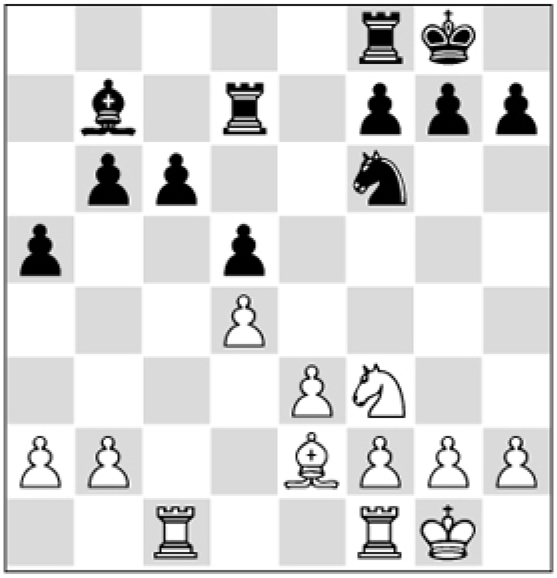
White clearly wants to play d3-d4 at any moment that seems feasible. Black’s **14…♖e8** looks to make this freeing move difficult for all time. We are dealing here with a preventive effect. It is really only the outer form of the move that is mysterious (a rook occupying a file that for the moment is still closed) and not its strategic goal.

Nevertheless, we wish to retain the description ‘mysterious’, only this time directing the irony away from the moves.

To demand of a piece that it have only a direct attacking effect is the mark of a mere wood-pusher. The more astute chess mind asks of his pieces that they also undertake preventive actions. The following situation is typical: a freeing action (usually a pawn advance) planned by our opponent would as a consequence also give us an open file; this potential open file, whose opening does not lie in our power, we nevertheless take possession of, and indeed in advance, with the idea of spoiling our opponent’s intent to open the file.

The ‘mysterious’ rook move is a staunch and integral part of a rational chess strategy. The studious chess adept should practice this strategy incessantly, in particular through psychological combat against the preconception that only the highest degree of activity is worthy of a rook. I might argue that the prevention of freeing advances is much more important than the question of whether the rook at any given moment is exerting an effect or is standing by passively.

We offer some examples. See the next diagram.

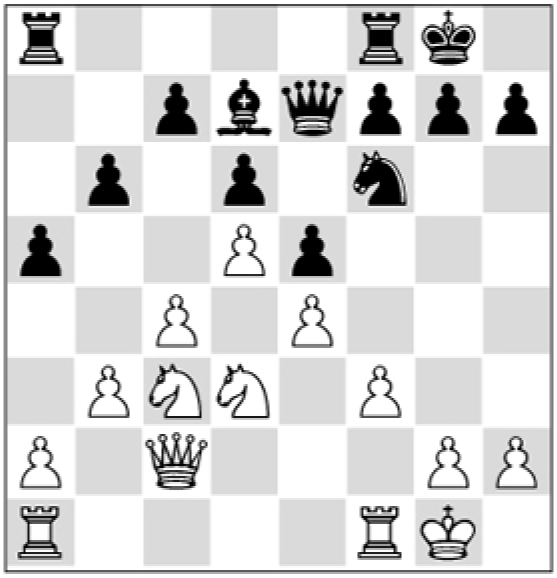


Example Position

This position has been constructed as a schema, dealing with the opening phase only. White plays **1.♖fd1**, that is, he expects an eventual …c6-c5 and will in this case, after dxc5 bxc5, use his rooks on the c-and d-files to exert pressure on the 'hanging' pawns at c5 and d5.

The 'mysterious' rook move generally occurs in the opening. But even in the early middlegame it plays an important role. See Diagram 405 (a schema).

405



Black seeks, by …♖a7 and …♖fa8, to forestall White's planned a2-a3, b3-b4, and c4-c5. At the very least it should lessen the impact of White's forward march

The second player blithely plays **1…♖a7**. If **2.a3**, then **2…♖fa8**. White can now put his plan (b3-b4 and c4-c5) into motion but only at the cost of certain concessions to his opponent. There might follow, for example, **3.♕b2 ♕d8 4.b4 axb4 5.axb4 ♕b8! 6.♖xa7? ♕xa7**, when Black maintains control of the a-file. Or **6.♖fb1 ♔f8 7.c5 bxc5 8.♖xa7 ♖xa7 9.bxc5 ♕xb2 10.♖xb2 ♖a3 11.♖c2 ♗c8! 12.c6!** (best; not however 12.cxd6 cxd6 13.♘b5 ♖a1+ 14.♔f2 ♗a6 with near equality for Black) **12…♘e8** and …f7-f5, with counterplay.

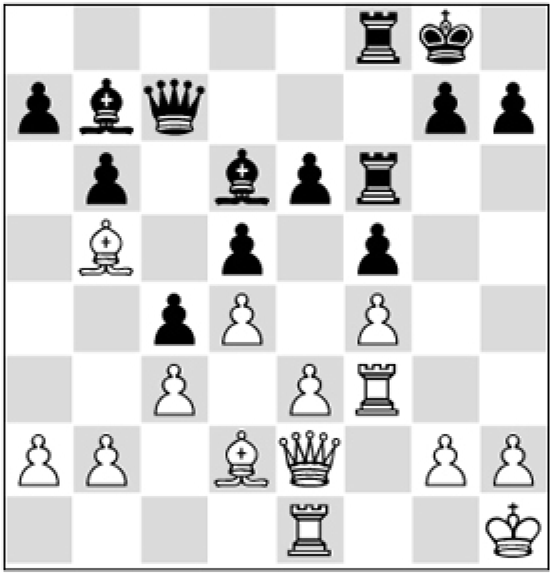
A further example is taken from an actual game conclusion.

Kupchik-Capablanca

Lake Hopatcong, August 1926

After White’s 19th move the following position was reached (Diagram 406):

406



Black (Capablanca), on the move, initiates a preventive action against White’s g2-g4, which he carries out in virtuoso style

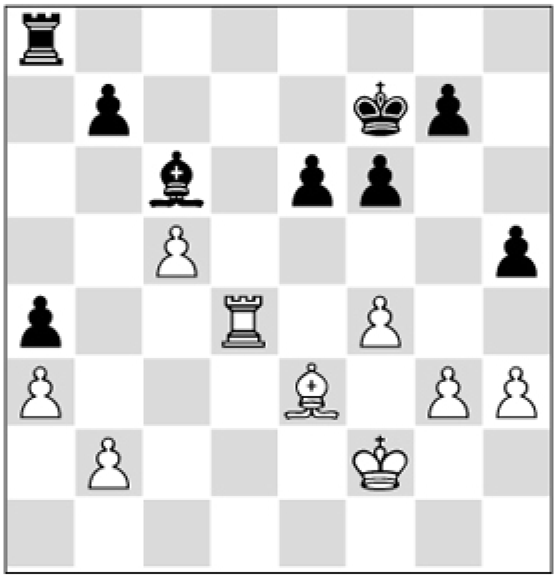
The chain d5 and c4 against d4 and c3 requires an attack against the base at c3 with …a7-a6, …b6-b5, …a6-a5, and …b5-b4. First, however, it is necessary to secure the black position against the attack g2-g4. With this in mind, Black played **19…h5! 20.♜ef1 ♜h6!!** The ‘mysterious’ rook move, for Black sees White’s h2-h3 and g2-g4 coming and in the event of this wants to be ready to attack down the h-file. There followed **21.♝e1 g6 22.♝h4 ♚f7! 23.♛e1 a6** Now is the right time! **24.♝a4 b5 25.♝d1 ♝c6 26.♜h3** A defensive move on the queenside was the proper course here. **26…a5 27.♝g5 ♜hh8 28.♛h4 b4 29.♛e1** Or 29.♗f6 ♗e7. **29…♜b8 30.♜hf3 a4** and won with the attack **31. ♜3f2 a3 32.b3 cxb3 33.♝xb3 ♝b5 34.♜g1 ♛xc3**, etc. The rook maneuver …♖f8-f6-h6-h8 operated here in a very flexible way and will give pleasure to anyone playing over the game.

Von Gottschall-Nimzowitsch

Hannover 1926

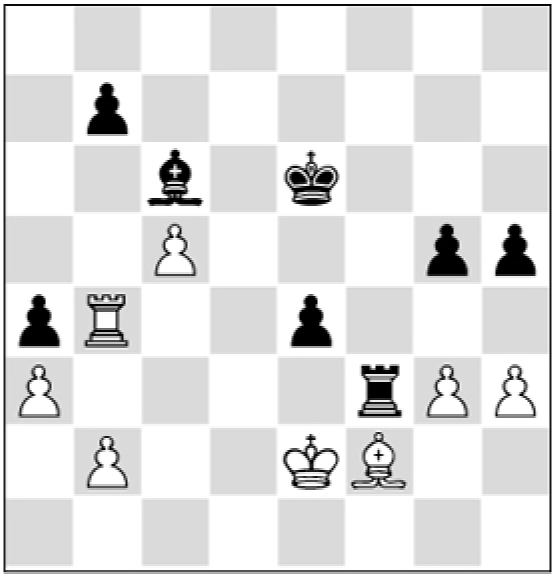
After White’s 28th move the following position was reached (Diagram 407):

407



Black looks to exploit his pawn majority on the kingside with …♔f7-g6-f5 and …e6-e5. But on 28…♔g6 White would play 29.g4. I therefore chose the ‘mysterious’ rook move (hence even in the endgame this is possible): **28…♖h8!** After the further moves **29.♖d1 ♔g6 30.♖d4 ♔f5 31.♗d2** there followed a ‘mysterious’ rook move, **31…♖f8**, which in the name of accuracy we should rather call semi-mysterious, for 31…♖f8 should be distinguished from 28…♖h8 (whose purpose was strictly defensive) in its purely active nature. There now followed **32.♗e1 e5 33.fxe5 fxe5 34.♖h4 g5 35.♖b4 ♔e6+ 36.♔e2 e4 37.♗f2 ♖f3** Diagram 408.

408



The passed pawn, the penetration by the rook, and a certain weakness of the white c5-pawn have brought about a slow decline in White’s game (cf. also our notes to this game in Chapter 5 of this section, Section 3).

The mysterious rook move – which places a rook on a closed file, one that can be opened only by our opponent (but if our opponent does not do so our rook is standing there ‘for nothing’) – such a rook move should never be played without the awareness that by doing so we are sacrificing some of the rook’s effective strength. This sacrifice is made for the sake of preventing an enemy freeing maneuver, or at least to make it more difficult.

But if we recognize that a freeing move planned by our opponent is in fact incorrect – it does not really free him – it would be highly uneconomical to make such a sacrifice. On the contrary, ‘Good luck!’ (Be my guest!)

In the game Blackburne-Nimzowitsch, mentioned above, the difference between a genuine and an illusory freeing move is obvious to the eye. And as it is quite significant also for our concept of prophylaxis, we present it in full.

J.Blackburne-Nimzowitsch

St. Petersburg 1914

1.e3 d6 2.f4 e5 3.fxe5 dxe5 4.♘c3 ♗d6

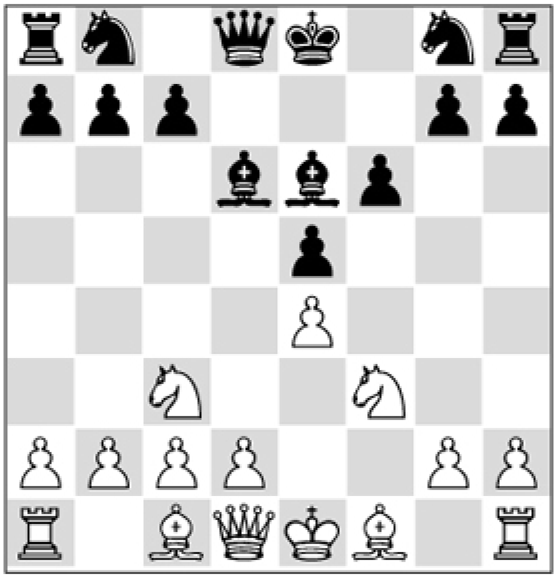
The best move, as the early development of the knights, advocated by Lasker, would not have gotten to the heart of the matter. This ‘heart of the matter’ is rather contained in the pawn configuration and in the hindering of all freeing pawn moves.

5.e4 ♗e6

Preventing ♗c4.

6.♘f3 f6

409



Black plays (as will become evident with his 8th move) to prevent the advance d3-d4, which in a certain sense would free his game. For d3-d4 would bring White’s central majority to fruition. Hence Black, in the moves to come, succeeds in completely restraining the enemy pawn majority. And now my esteemed reader may ask, ‘Why does Black permit the freeing d2-d4 on the 7th move?’

7.d3

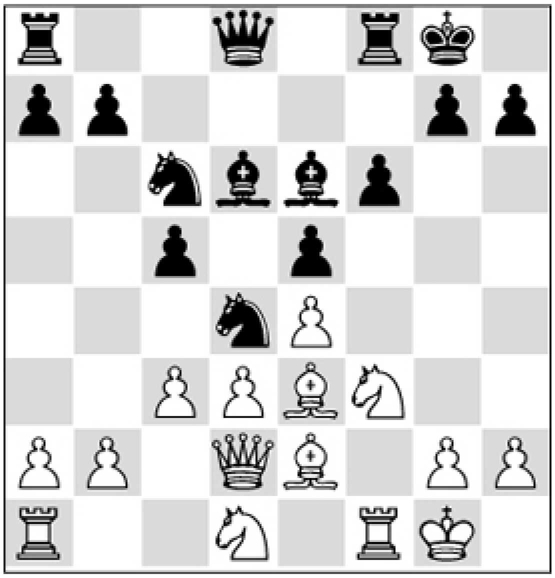
White forgoes the advance – and rightly so, as 7.d4 would in this case be a typical example of an illusory liberation that would only create fresh weaknesses; e.g., 7.d4 ♘d7! 8.d5 (otherwise, …exd4 would follow at some point followed by play against the isolated e4-pawn) 8…♗f7 and occupation of c5 with a bishop or knight.

7…♞e7 8.♝e3 c5!

With the help of the resources he has on the d-file Black now manages to force his opponent on the defensive (see Black’s 9th and 10th moves).

9.♛d2 ♞bc6 10.♝e2 ♞d4 11.0-0 0-0 12.♞d1 ♞ec6 13.c3

410



This is the reward that Black’s purposeful operations have earned for him: d3 is a weakness.

13…♘xe2+ 14.♕xe2

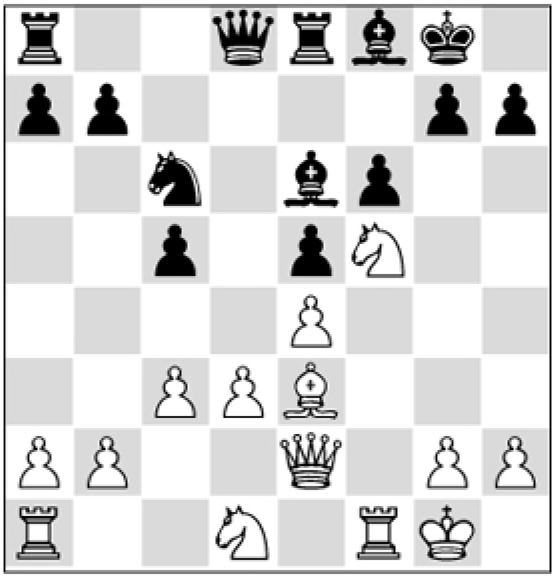
See Diagram 404.

14…♖e8!

The ‘mysterious’ rook move, which in the event of d3-d4 threatens to make use of the e-file (working against e4). The text also makes room for the bishop at f8, where it wants to go.

15.♘h4 ♗f8 16.♘f5

411



16…♚h8!

White has made proper use of the f-file – his only chance. The text move, for all its unpretentiousness, is a significant one in positional play. Black ensures an eventual …g7-g6 followed by …f6-f5 without being disturbed by a check on h6.

17.g4 ♛d7!

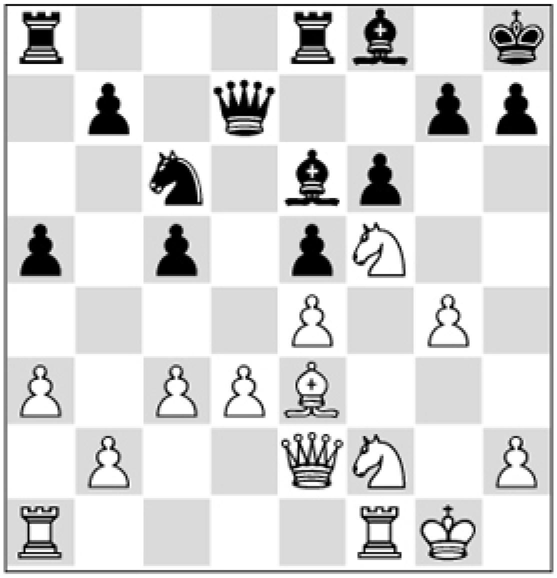
This makes possible a counter to the ever-present threat g4-g5; e.g., 18.g5 g6 19.♘g3 f5!, when Black is well placed. See the previous note.

18.♞f2 a5

The a2-pawn is under constant threat. If, say, 19.b3, then 19…a4 can be played. We see that the weakness of White’s center has affected his queenside as well.

19.a3

412



19…b5

Strong here was 19…♗b3, although by playing it he would forgo his counter to g4-g5. Nevertheless, 19…♗b3 could have been calmly played (for one must not become a slave to one’s counters-measures!); e.g., 20.g5 fxg5 21.♗xg5 c4! (suggested by Lasker) 22.dxc4 ♔e6 23.♘e3 ♕g6 24.♕g4 ♗c5!, winning. Or 23.♕f3! ♗xc4 24.♖fd1 and Black has a slight advantage.

20.♜ad1 ♜ab8

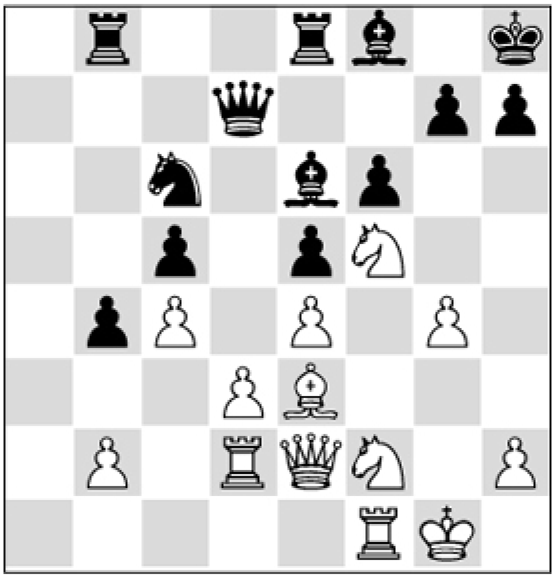
By playing the immediate 20…b4 Black could have saved himself a few tempi.

21.♖d2 b4 22.axb4 axb4!

22…cxb4? 23.d4!.

23.c4

413



23…♜a8?

Black has reached a strategically winning position, only he should not have hesitated any longer in playing his trumps. These consisted of …♘d4, which would have resulted in ♗xd4, and in …g7-g6 followed by …♗h6, dominating the new diagonal. Let us examine 23…g6 (instead of 23…♖a8): 24.♘g3 ♘d4! 25.♗xd4 cxd4 and …♗h6. Or 25.♕d1 (instead of the exchange) 25…♖a8 and …♕a4, forcing the exchange of queens. Black could also play his trumps in reverse order; e.g., 23…♘d4 24.♗xd4 cxd4 25.♕f3 (best) 25…g6 26.♘g3 ♕e7 27.♘d1 ♗h6 28.♖g2 ♗g5! followed by …♖b8-a8-a1, etc.

24.♕f3 ♜a2?

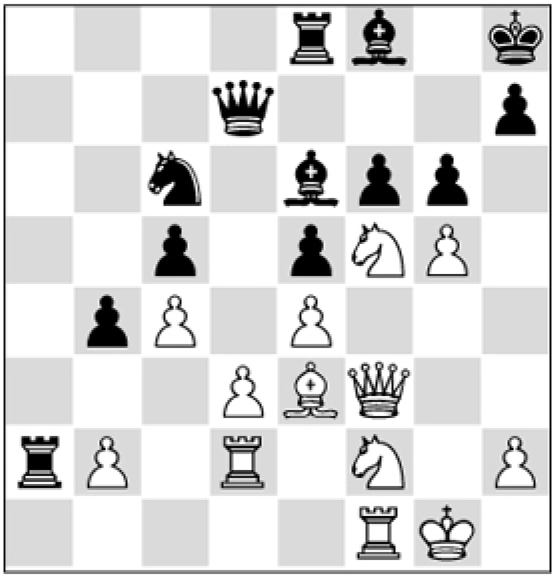
There was still time for 24…♘d4, etc.

25.g5

Thanks to a tactical witticism (White’s 26th move) this advance, which Black thought he had prevented, is possible after all. Black now finds himself worse.

25…g6

414



26.♘g4!

Robbing Black of the fruits of his deeply thought-out scheme. There followed:

26…gxf5 27.♘xf6 ♘d4 28.♕f2

28.♕h5 won more quickly.

28…♕c6 29.♘xe8 ♕xe8 30.♗xd4 exd4 31.exf5

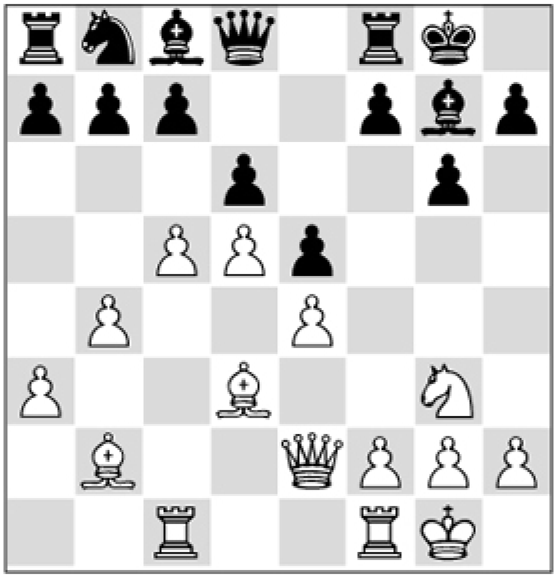
And White won easily.

What we want to take away from this game in the first place is the ability to distinguish between the genuine and the illusory freeing move. We should also pay close attention to the way in which Black was able to hold up d3-d4 and later the g4-g5 advance. The following postulate is of the utmost importance:

I am unaware of any such thing as an ‘absolute’ freeing move. Such a move in a position in which development is far from complete is always shown to be ‘illusory’. And, vice versa, a move that does not come under the category of freeing moves can, assuming a surplus of tempi at our disposal, lead to a very free game.

Consider for example the following position (Diagram 415):

415



The ‘freeing move’ …f7-f5, due to Black’s retarded development, only leads to a premature opening (and therefore a compromising) of his game

White clearly has a tremendous advantage in tempi, and in these circumstances Black’s freeing …f7-f5 only leads to a premature opening of his undeveloped game. For instance, **1…f5 2.exf5! gxf5 3.♘h5** and f2-f4, with a strong attack.

This association of ideas was unknown to the pseudo-classical school, which knew only absolute freeing moves. They regarded Black’s …f7-f5 (in a configuration with white pawns at d5 and e4 vs. black pawns at d6 and e5) as such a freeing move, and considered that in eighty out of a hundred cases it was to be highly recommended. We have reduced this number to about sixty out of a hundred, for even after the defensive f2-f3 (after 1…f5 2.exf5! gxf5 and now 3.f3) the strength of the pair of black pawns at e5 and f5 should by no means be over-estimated. And now we are suddenly faced with the ‘primordial-cell’ of the restraining action.

4. The ‘primordial-cell’ of restraining action directed against a pawn majority is presented in its purest form. The fight against a central majority. The qualitative majority.

I find it impossible to present the primordial-cell of restraint by way of diagrammitization (doesn’t that sound nice!?), so I shall choose another method. Suppose Black has a majority, let’s say with pawns at a5 and b5 against a white pawn on a3. Or pawns at e5 and f5 vs. a pawn at f3. In both cases he threatens to create a passed pawn, and in the second case threatens to initiate an attack on the white castled king, introduced by the formation of a wedge with …f5-f4 followed by …♖f5-h5, etc. The idea of restraint now lies in the plan of neutralizing the enemy majority by means of the open file in conjunction with two different blockade points. In the position with the white pawn at f3 and black pawns at e5 and f5, besides knights, bodyguards, and infantry, the player with the pawn majority has two threats at his disposal, the one consisting of the advance …e5-e4, the other being a wedge formation with …f5-f4, supplemented perhaps by the diversion …♖f5-g5 (or -h5), etc., At the same time, the establishment of a black knight on e3 is planned.

In what does the restraint idea now consist? Well, after …e5-e4, it lies in f3-f4 followed perhaps by ♗e3, to blockade Black’s e-pawn, and on …f5-f4 to stop the majority by ♘e4. This knight, due to its attacking radius, would make Black’s diversion hard to carry out.

We must therefore look to the germ-cell of restraining action on an open file combined with a two-fold possibility of establishing a blockade.

A central majority must not be allowed to advance too far, otherwise the threat of creating a wedge would have an all too painful effect. For example, in the position with White’s pawns at f2, g2, and h2 and his king on g1, and Black’s pawns on h7, g7, f4, and e4 (with many other pieces besides). With …f4-f3 (forming a wedge) the second player seeks to interrupt the lines of communication between g2/h2 and the rest of the second rank (a white rook on a2 would no longer be able to protect g2 or h2). Black’s attack must, ceteris paribus, be considered very strong. It is therefore necessary to fix the enemy central majority on the fourth rank (hence with black pawns at e5 and f5 and a white pawn at f3).

The concept of the qualitative majority is one that is easy to assimilate for the player who knows how to handle our pawn chain. The majority that has advanced farther in the direction of the enemy pawn base is naturally to be regarded as qualitatively superior.

Thus in the position with white pawns at a2, b2, c3 d4, e5, f4, g4, and h3 vs. black pawns on a7, b7, c5, d5, e6, f7, g7, and h7, White has the qualitative majority on the kingside and Black on the queenside.

5. The various forms under which restraint tends to appear are further elucidated

(a) The struggle against mobile center pawns. (b) The restraint of a qualitative majority. (c) The restraint of double-complexes. (d) My special variation and its propensity to restrain.

(a) *The mobile center pawn.* White with a center pawn at d4 against Black's pawns at d6 and f7 (or pawn at d4 vs. pawns at c6 and e6). This formation may arise after, for example, 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 d6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗d7. Black's restraining action will be initiated with play on the e-file, with …♘f6, …♗e7, …0-0, …♖e8, and …♗f8. Another important resource for restraining the white center is the more passive structure with pawns at d6 and f6. The position with a white pawn at e4 and black pawns at d6 and f6 is typical; I call it the 'sawing' position, inasmuch as the e4-pawn is to be sawed up between these pawns.

The sequence of events in a maneuver directed against the mobile center usually involves:

(a) the passive sawing position, then

(b) the more aggressive hindering action on the center pawn exerted by a rook;

(c) making backward or isolated the once mobile center pawn;

(d) the mechanical stopping of this pawn by a blockading piece;

(e) winning the pawn.

The attitude of the restraining partner may be sufficiently characterized by the slogan, 'First restrain, then blockade, and finally destroy!' Carrying this out is difficult but rewarding (also in the pedagogical sense). Hence the analysis of the position reached after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 is excellent training, which we cannot recommend enough to our aspiring student.

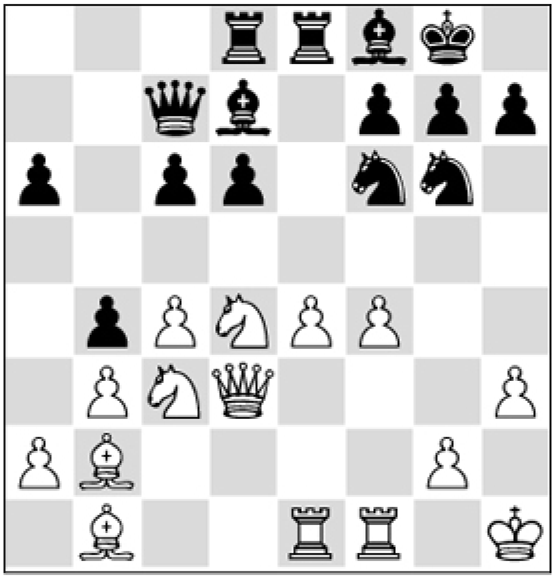
The following illustrative game is, in its motifs, only apparently complicated; in reality, it is the fight against e4 that dominates the play.

Shoosmith-Nimzowitsch, Ostend 1907

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 d6 3.♞f3 ♞bd7 4.♞c3 e5 5.e4 ♝e7 6.♝d3 0-0 7.0-0 exd4! If 7…♖e8, then 8.d5 and Black will remain cramped; e.g., 8…♘c5 9.♗e3 ♘xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘d7 11.b4 a5 12.a3, etc. **8.♞xd4 ♜e8 9.b3 ♞e5 10.♝c2 a6** The black advance will soon be comprehensible. **11.♝b2 ♝d7 12.h3 ♝f8 13.f4 ♞g6 14.♛f3 c6 15.♜ae1 b5** Now the situation is clear: Black is keeping the e4-pawn under observation and at the same time seeks to eliminate the bothersome c-pawn, for this pawn makes his own d6-pawn backward. **16.♛d3 ♛c7 17.♚h1 ♜ad8 18.♝b1 b4!!** Diagram 416.

Here we are dealing with a chain formation (a rather unusual one, to be sure).

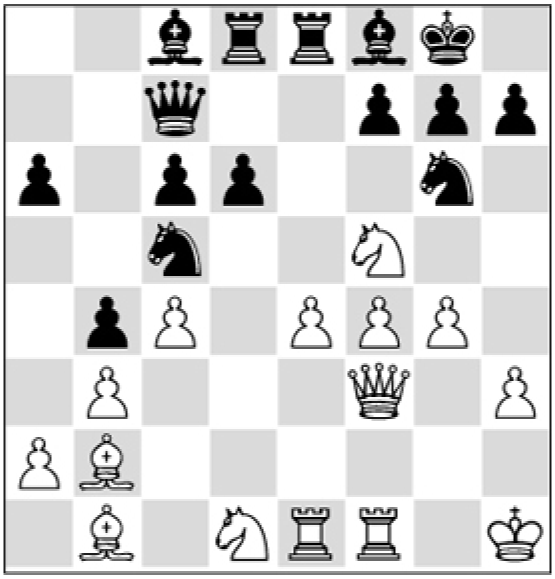
416



Black is planning …♗c8, …♘d7-c5, and …a7-a7-a4

The links of the chain are the white pawns at b3 and c4, opposed by the black c4-pawn and knight on c5(!) – for why should a piece not be allowed (by exception) to take over the role of a chain pawn? Black's plan consists of playing …♗c8, …♘d7-c5, and …a7-a5-a4, to attack the base of the white pawn chain at b3. Hence the …b5-b4 advance involves the transfer of the attack from c4 to b3. **19.♘d1 ♗c8 20.♕f3 ♘d7 21.♘f5 ♘c5 22.g4?** Diagram 417.

417



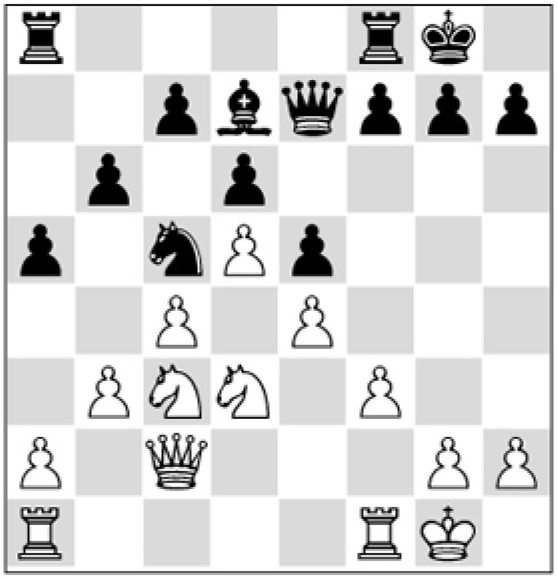
22.g4? permits Black a spectacular breakthrough

An error that for the moment leaves the f4-pawn in need of protection. But this ‘brief’ moment is long enough to permit Black a spectacular breakthrough. **22…♘e6!** Exploiting White’s inaccuracy. **23.♕g3 ♗b7 24.h4 d5 25.e5 c5 26.cxd5 ♖xd5 27.♔g1** 27.♗e4? ♖xd1!. **27…♖d2 28.♘fe3 ♕c6 29.♖f3 ♕xf3** and White resigned.

Let me also refer the attentive reader to my games against Teichmann (Game 2) and Blackburne (earlier in this chapter, Section 3).

(b) *The struggle against the qualitative majority.* Let us imagine that in Diagram 405 the black knight stands on c5 rather than f6.

405

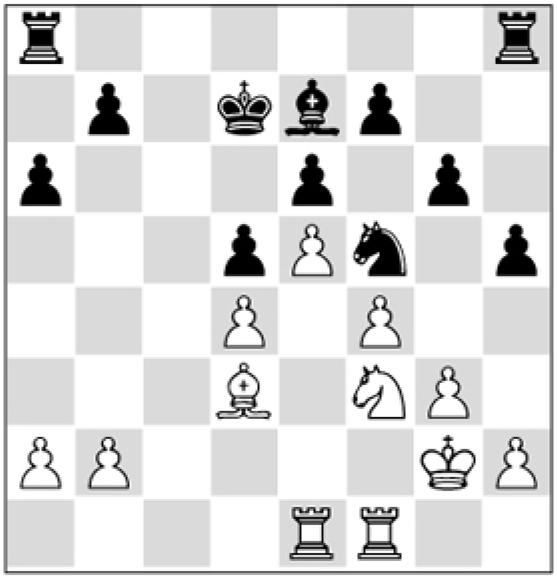


(modified)

We now have a typical case of the restraint of a qualitative majority. If **1.♞xc5**, then **1…bxc5**, and White’s advance is held in restraint. But if 1.a3, intending to follow up with 2.b4, then **1…a4! 2.b4 ♞b3!**, when this strong knight position compensates for a potential c4-c5.

It should be understood that the action of Black’s rook’s pawn is made up of equal parts passive and aggressive action, for this pawn, or the h5-pawn in Diagram 418, is the real support of our whole restraining action.

418

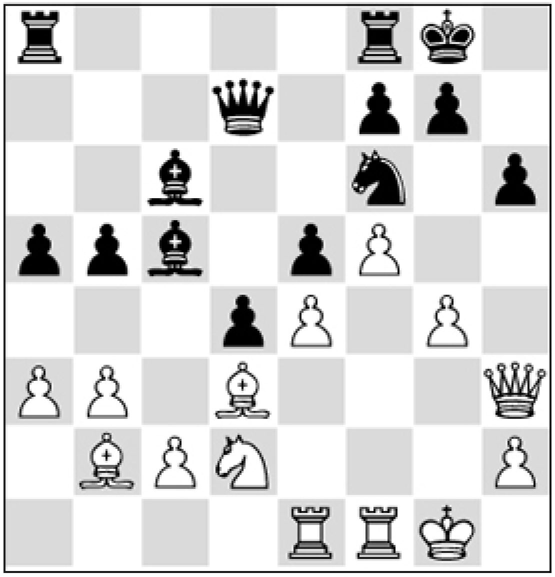


White’s qualitative majority is held in restraint. 1.h3 would be effectively answered by 1…h4! 2.g4 ♘g3

In the diagrammed position, the advance …h5-h4 would be the reply to h2-h3, and Black would then answer g3-g4 with …♘g3.

Another typical procedure is shown in the following game finish (Diagram 419).

419



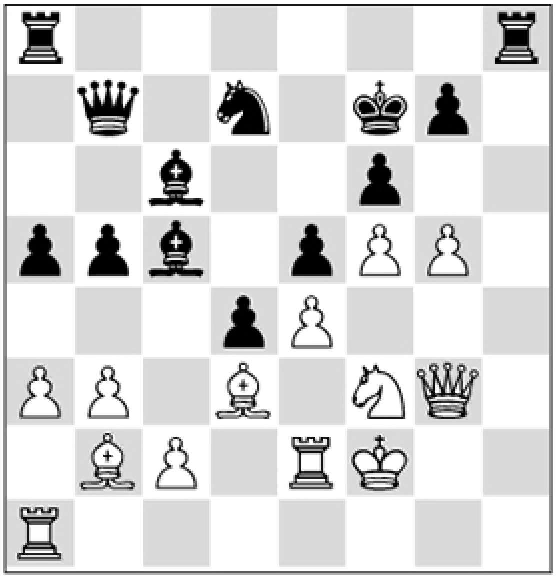
Van Vliet-Nimzowitsch

Here White’s planned advance (in closed formation) with ♕g3, h2-h4, and g4-g5 cannot be held up indefinitely. This advance (let us imagine that Black’s inevitable …f7-f6 has already been played) would expose the base of the black pawn chain (after g5xf6 g7xf6). But much worse for Black would be the attack against his king that results from the white pawn advance. The right plan for Black lies in holding up h2-h4 and g4-g5 long enough for his king to escape.

With this in mind, the play went **21…♘h7 22.♘f3 ♕e7 23.♕g3 ♖fe8 24.h4 f6 25.♖a1** White, too, has weaknesses. **25…♕b7 26.♖fe1 ♔f7! 27.♖e2** If 27.g5, then 27…hxg5 28.hxg5 ♔e7!, with a tenable game. **27…♖h8!** The ‘mysterious’ rook move! **28.♔f2 ♘f8 29.g5 hxg5 30.hxg5 ♘d7** (Diagram 420)

White’s kingside attack may be said to have run aground…

420



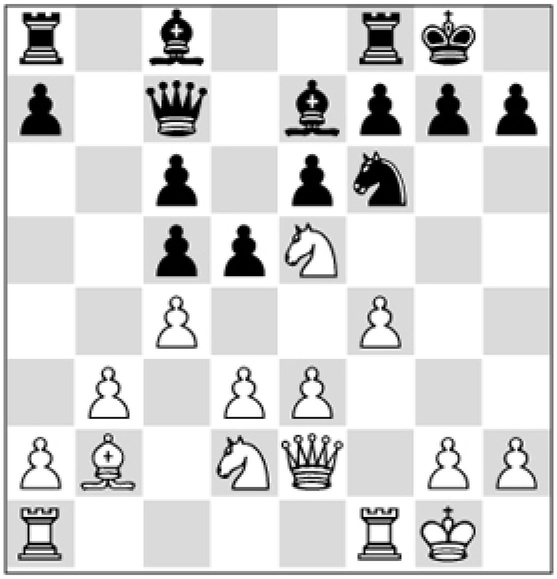
Van Vliet-Nimzowitsch

… for if **31.gxf6 gxf6 32.♕g6+ ♔e7 33.♕g7+ ♔d6!** Black would be very well placed indeed. **31.gxf6 gxf6 32.♘h4 ♖ag8 33.♘g6 ♖h5 34.♖g1 ♖g5** with advantage to Black. The defensive resource demonstrated here merits careful study.

(c) *Restraint of double-complexes.* Along with the dynamic weakness of such a complex, which we have stressed again and again, we have to designate the following points as decisive:

(1) the incarcerated bishop;
(2) the lack of terrain, and the consequent difficulties in defense.
As examples of (1) we offer the Dutch Defense with colors reversed (Diagram 421) and the two following game beginnings:

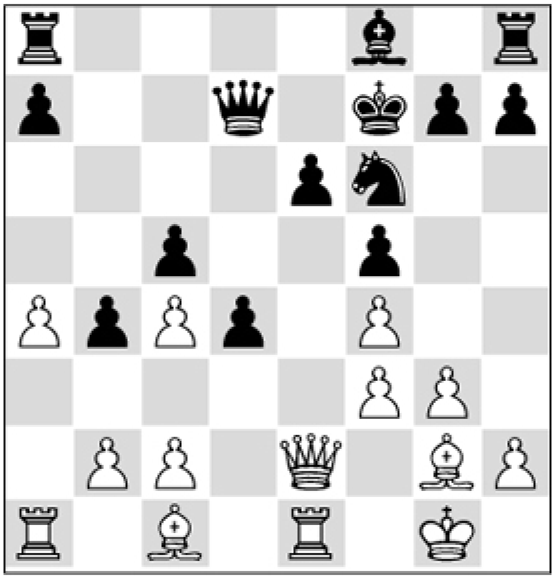
421



The ‘dead’ bishop on c8 (a prisoner in its own camp)

(I) **1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.d3** Somewhat unusual. **3…♘c6 4.♘c3 ♗g4! 5.g3 ♗xf3!! 6.exf3 e6 7.♗g2 f5! 8.0-0 d4** Delightful play. The bishop on d2 is now a prisoner in its own camp. The weakness at e6 is easily protected. **9.♘b1 b5 10.a4 b4 11.♘d2 ♘a5 12.♕e2 ♔f7 13.♖e1 ♕d7 14.♘c4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♘f6** (Diagram 422)

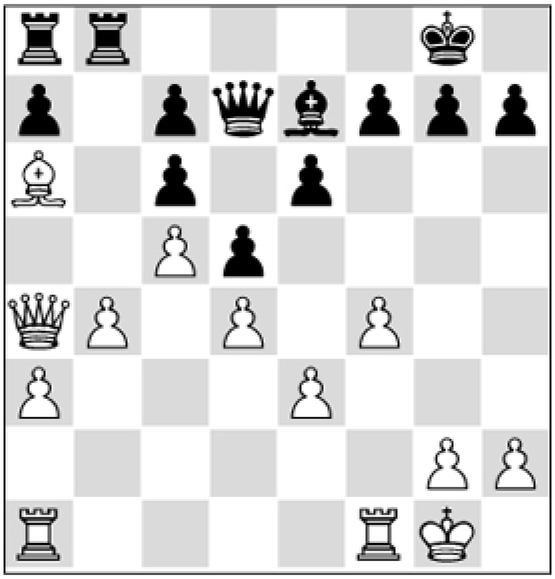
422



and Black (**Dr. Erdman**) is dictating the tempo.

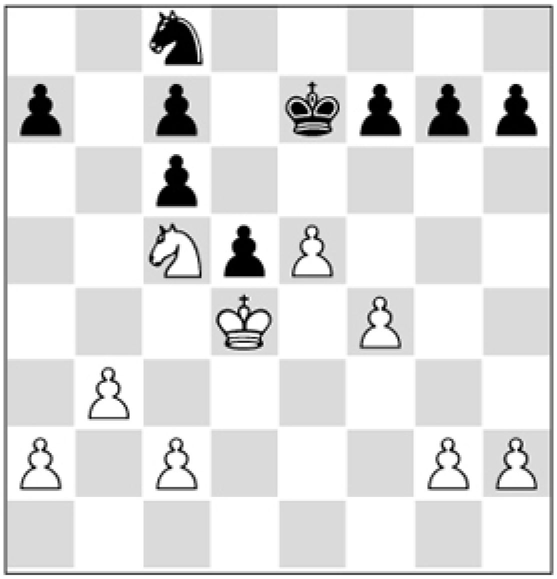
(II) **1.e3 e5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.♗e2** White can consider 5.d4 exd4 6.exd4 d5 7.♗e2, with a level game. **5…0-0 6.0-0 ♖e8 7.a3 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 d6** – **Nimzowitsch-Réti**, Wroclaw 1925 – and White suffered the entire game due to the difficulty of making use of his bishop at c1.
Let us examine Diagrams 423 and 424.

423



Without the c7-pawn Black would have had freedom to move, but here – in view of the possible threat of ♗b7 – he is almost stalemated

424



The knight, which blockades an enemy doubled pawn, is tremendously effective!

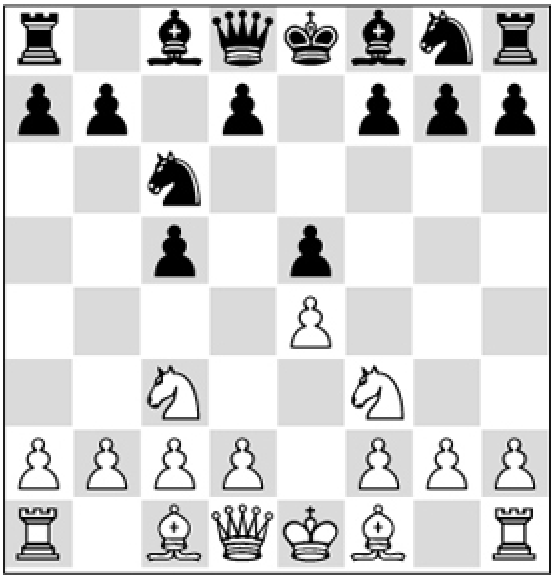
The latter shows the blockading knight, whose effect in the case of the double-complex is simply enormous. Not only is Black’s majority in its collective value illusory – no, it is also true that each individual component of that majority appears to be in danger of its life. In these circumstances White’s majority will win as it pleases. Even with rooks on the board (a white rook on a4 and a black rook on d8 or b6) the situation would be untenable for the second player. This shows the degree to which a restrained doubled pawn can cripple a position!

(d) *My special position and its inherent propensity to restrain.* We speak here of the variation **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6** and now **4.e4**. Already in 1924 I tried, after 1.f4 c5 2.e4 ♘c6 3.d3 (originating with Dr. Krause) 3…g6, the move 4.c4, whose motif I visualize as a blockade spanning half the board. In *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* for 1925, page 10, I made the following note to 4.c4:

‘Inasmuch as this move is not inspired by the hope of preventing …d7-d5 or even of making it more difficult, a special explanation is called for. Black wishes to build up a configuration with …e7-e6 and …d7-d5. After this has been accomplished he will then be in a position to consider a further build-up of his attacking formation on the queenside, namely with …♘d4, to use the c-file to put pressure on the c2-pawn after the ensuing ♘xd4 cxd4. The text move anticipates this possible broadening of the play on the queenside on the part of Black. The hole on d4 seems to be of no consequence.'

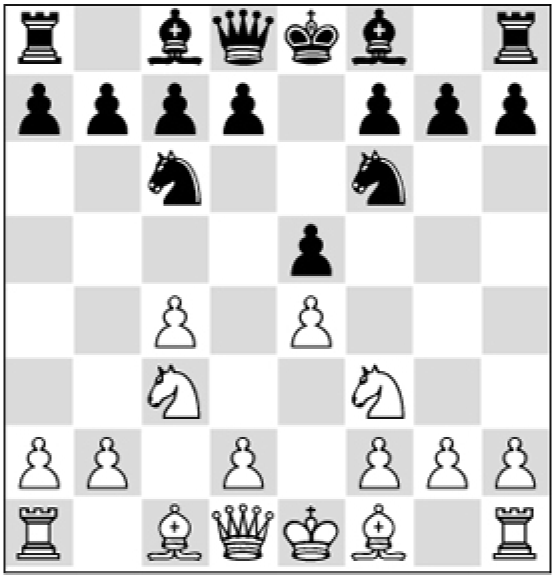
When, today, I ask myself the question where I got the moral courage to make a move that runs so utterly counter to tradition, or even to conceive of such a plan, I think I may say that it was my intensive preoccupation with the problem of the blockade that helped me to do so. I was continually seeking to derive ever fresher perspectives on this problem, and so it happened that as Black, at Dresden 1926, after **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3** I ventured the move **3…e5** which at the time caused an enormous uproar.

425



My special variation **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4** (Diagram 426)

426



is to be understood simply as a further step on a path that had already been opened up.

Incidentally, the commendable theorist Dr. O. H. Krause, in Oringe, Denmark, dedicated an independent investigation to the possibility of a combination of e4 and c4, which independently of my analysis is reported to have arrived at results that to some extent were similar to my own.

Now let us proceed to some illustrative games, and let us also direct the reader’s attention to my monograph *The Blockade* (see Appendix Two).

Game 28

Aron Nimzowitsch
Akiba Rubinstein
Dresden 1926

The following game illustrates the effect of preventive measures and the concept of collective mobility.

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4

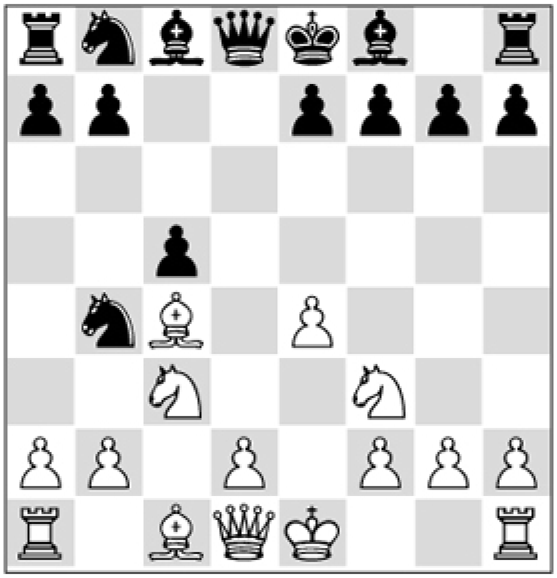
An innovation of mine that, in exchange for the backwardness of the d2-pawn, aims at securing other advantages.

5…♘b4

Here preferable was 5…♘xc3 6.bxc3 g6.

6.♗c4!

427



6…e6

The immediate exploitation of the weakness at d3 is not possible at this point; e.g., 6…♘d3+ 7.♔e2! ♘f4+ 8.♔f1, with the threat d2-d4. Or 6…♘d3+ 7.♔e2 ♘xc1+ 8.♖xc1 ♘c6 9.♗b5 ♗d7 10.♗xc6, followed by d2-d4, with the better endgame.

7.0-0 ♘8c6

Here we would prefer 7…a6. To be sure White then gets an excellent game with 8.a3 ♘c6 9.d3 and ♗e3.

8.d3 ♘d4

White threatened 9.a3.

9.♘xd4 cxd4 10.♘e2

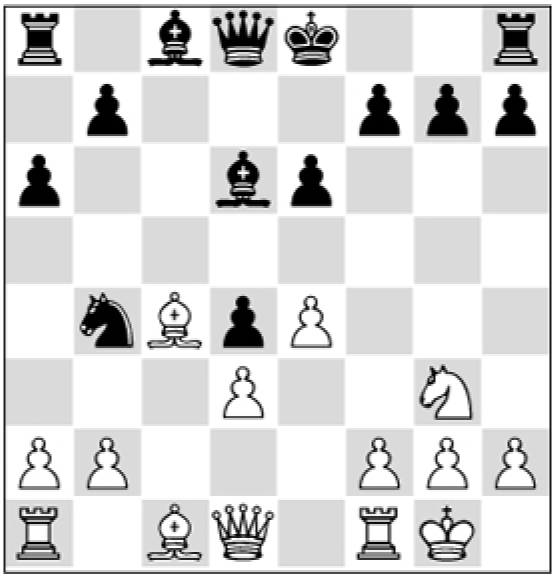
White now stands very well: any weakness that may be said to exist at d3 has been covered up, and the collective mobility of White’s kingside (f2-f4!) is considerable – and, what is most important, the apparently blocked-off bishop at c4 plays a crucial preventive role, directed against a possible …e6-e5.

10…a6

Directed against 11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.♘xd4.

11.♘g3 ♗d6

428

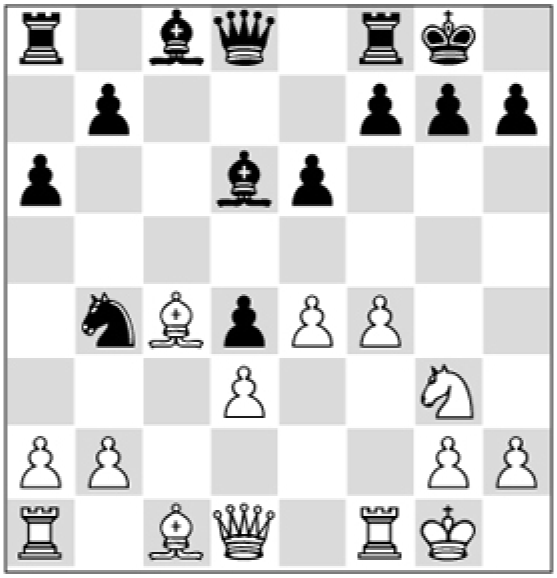


12.f4

Here 12.♕g4 was very strong; e.g., 12…0-0 13.♗g5! ♗e7 14.♗h6 ♗f6 15.♗xg7 ♗xg7 16.♘h5. Or 12…0-0 13.♗g5 e5 14.♕h4, with a sacrifice on g7 (♘h5xg7) to follow shortly. Best after 12.♕g4 would be the reply 12…♕f6; e.g., 13.f4, but even in this case White would have the completely superior game. After the less sharp text move Black can just about equalize.

12…0-0

429



13.♕f3

A direct mating attack is no longer to be found; e.g., 13.e5 ♗c7! 14.♕g4 ♔h8 15.♘h5 ♖g8 16.♖f3 f5! 17.exf6 gxf6 18.♕h4 ♖g6 19.♖h3 ♕e7, when Black threatens to consolidate with …♗d7 and …♖ag8.

13…♚h8 14.♝d2 f5 15.♜ae1 ♘c6

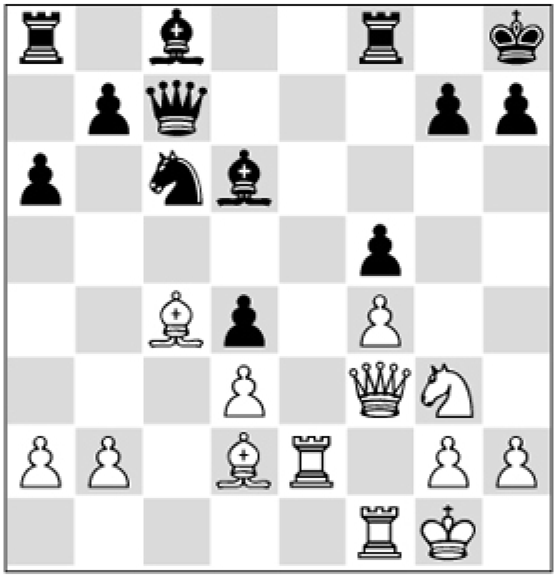
Rubinstein has defended himself with great skill. But White still has one trump in his hand: the e-file.

16.♜e2 ♛c7

Not good. In cramped positions one should not give away even the slightest possibility of a future move! 16…♕c7 ‘gives away’ the possibility 18…♕f6 after 17.exf5 exf5. Correct therefore was 16…♗d7. If in response 17.exf5 (best) 17…exf5 18.♖fe1, then 18…♕f6 and Black at any rate stands much better than he does in the game.

17.exf5 exf5

430



18.♘h1

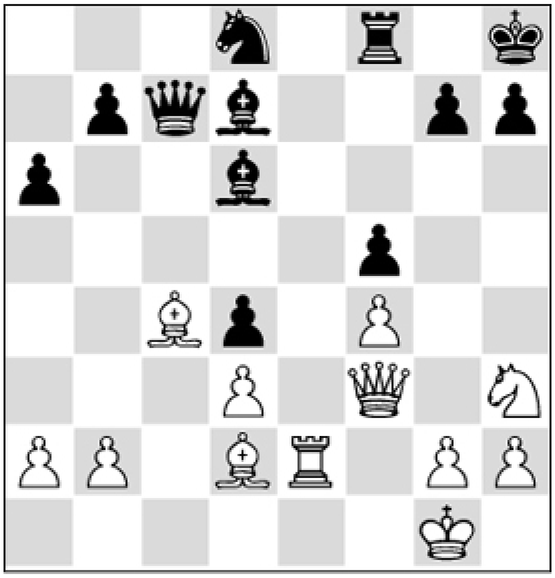
The knight takes itself on a long journey, with g5 as its destination, in order to support with all its might the direct (and no longer merely preventive) activity of the awakened c4-bishop. And meanwhile, White’s e-file, as it were thrown on its own resources, undertakes a desperate but ultimately successful struggle for its existence. The vitality of this file constitutes the point of the knight maneuver!

18…♝d7 19.♞f2 ♜ae8 20.♜fe1 ♜xe2 21.♜xe2 ♞d8

Now we see that 21…♖e8 would fail to 22.♕d5.

22.♞h3

431



22…♝c6

And now 22…♖e8 would conjure up combinative pleasantries; e.g., 23.♕h5! ♖xe2 24.♘g5 h6 25.♕g6 hxg5 26.♕h5#.

23.♛h5 g6 24.♛h4 ♚g7 25.♛f2!

Black’s castled position was still too strongly defended. So White aims first to force a regrouping of his opponent’s forces.

25…♝c5

Or 25…♕b6 26.b4 and ♗c3!.

26.b4 ♝b6 27.♛h4

The reversion-theme, otherwise only to be found in problems. Also good, however, was 27.♕e1; e.g., 27…♗e4 28.♘f2, winning a pawn with ♘xe4, etc.

27…♜e8

On 27…♖f6 there would have followed 28.♘g5 h6 29.♘h7!, with an immediate win.

28.♜e5! ♞f7

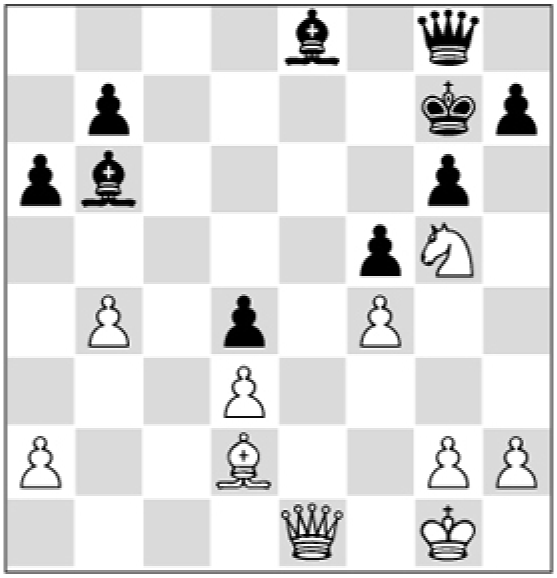
On 28…h6 White would play 29.g4, with a violent attack; e.g., 29…fxg4 30.f5 ♕xe5 31.f6+ ♕xf6 32.♕xh6#, or 29…g5? 30.fxg5, with a mate threat at h6. After the text move White forces an elegant win.

29.♝xf7 ♛xf7

If 29…♖xe5, then 30.fxe5 ♕xf7 31.♘g5 ♕g8 32.e6 ♗d5 33.♕f4, with an easy win.

30.♞g5 ♛g8 31.♜xe8 ♝xe8 32.♛e1!

432



A curious position for Black. Despite the paucity of material there is in the air a threat of mate that cannot be warded off. Some fine play now ensues.

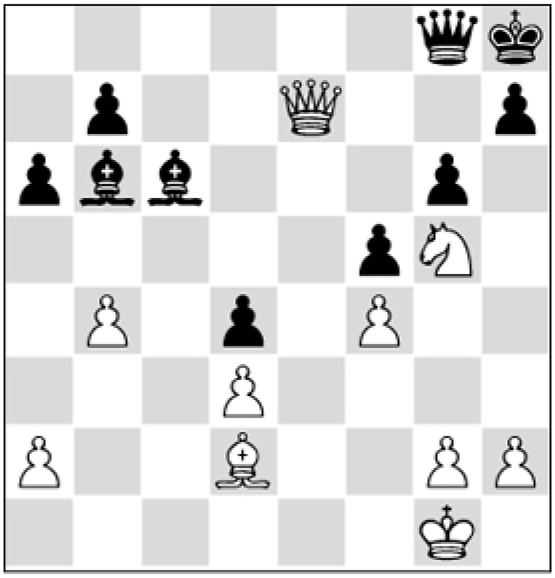
32…♝c6

On 32…♔f8, winning is 33.♕e5 ♗d8 (still best: on 33…♕xa2 there follows 34.♕f6+ ♔g8 35.♘e6, or 34…♗f7 35.♘xf7 and ♕xb6) 34.♘e6+ ♔e7 35.♕c5+! ♔d7 36.♘f8+!. Observe here how White, on his 35th move, forgoes the discovered check and how the black king has gotten himself tangled up with his own pieces!

33.♛e7+ ♚h8

If 33…♔h6, then of course 34.♘e6.

433



34.b5

Pulling the noose tight! On 34…axb5, 35.♘e6 h5! 36.♕f6+ ♔h7 37.♘g5+ ♔h6 38.♗b4 should lead to mate.

34…♕g7

Desperation.

35.♕xg7+ ♚xg7 36.bxc6

and White won.

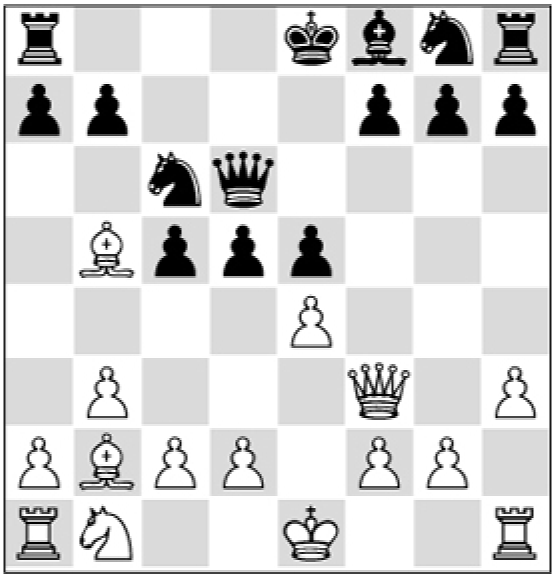
Game 29

Aron Nimzowitsch
Stefano Rosselli del Turco
Baden-Baden 1925

Illustrating the restraint of a double-complex in an especially emphatic way.

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 ♘c6 4.♗b2 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 e5 7.♗b5 ♕d6 8.e4

434



We are concerned here with the remarkable situation we spoke of earlier (Diagram 387), in which we do not bring about doubled pawns at once (by 8.♗xc6+ bxc6) but rather create them in a roundabout way. In fact, after 8.♗xc6+? bxc6 we would not be able to force our ‘obstinate’ opponent out of his ‘frog position’ – he would never accommodate us by playing …d5-d4; e.g., 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.e4 ♘f6, etc.

8…d4 9.♞a3

Threatening 10.♘c4 ♕c7 11.♗xc6+ bxc6, when the weakness of the doubled pawn is evident.

9…f6 10.♞c4 ♛d7 11.♛h5+

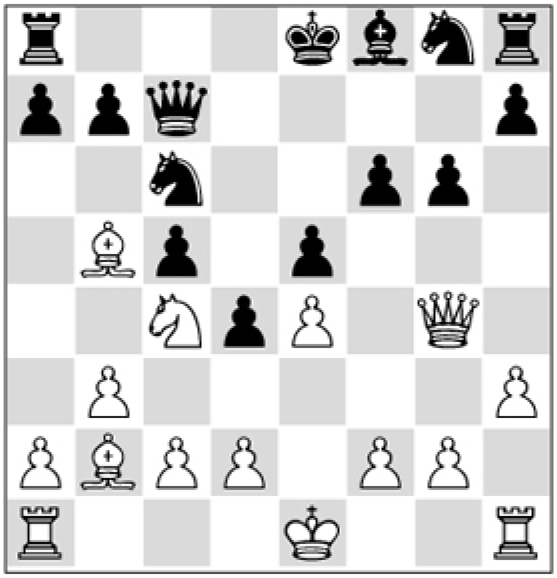
The queen maneuver is intended to help prevent his opponent’s castling *queenside*, and *not* to the kingside, as one might suppose at first glance.

11…g6 12.♛f3 ♛c7

Not 12…0-0-0 because of 13.♘a5, when the protective move 13…♘ge7 is prohibited on account of 14.♕xf6.

13.♛g4!

435



Now she rejoices in the observation post she has won for herself! This queen maneuver has a most hypermodern feel to it!

13…♚f7

White threatened 14.♕e6+ ♔d8 (or 14…♗e7 15.♘a5) 15.♗xc6, when the unpleasant doubled pawn becomes an established fact.

14.f4 h5 15.♛f3 exf4 16.♝xc6

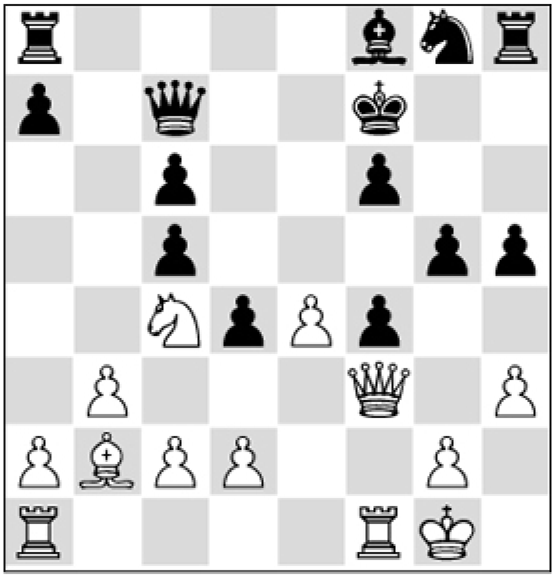
At the right moment, for now the queen cannot recapture; e.g., 16…♕xc6 17.♕xf4 ♖e8 18.0-0!! ♕xe4 (18…♖xe4 19.♘e5+) 19.♕c7+!! and wins (19…♕e7 20.♘d6+ and ♘xe8).

16…bxc6

At last White has achieved his goal – at the cost of a pawn, it is true, but here this plays only a subordinate role.

17.0-0 g5

436



For (see the previous note) Black’s position *can* be broken up (White cannot of course let Black secure his position by placing his knight on e5). For the breaking-up process three pawn moves are required: c2-c3, e4-e5, and h3-h4. Were White to content himself with only two of these three, his work would only be half done. In the game all three are made use of.

18.c3 ♜d8

Now this rook is happily tied (to d4)!

19.♜ae1! ♞e7 20.e5 ♞f5 21.cxd4! ♞xd4

If 21…cxd4, then 22.exf6 ♔xf6 23.♕e4, and 23…♘g3 is inadmissible because of 24.♗xd4+.

22.♛e4 ♝e7

On 22…f5 there would follow, in the best modern attacking spirit, the retreat 23.♕b1!; e.g., 23…♔e6 (to protect f5) 24.♕d3! and ♘d6!, with a decisive attack.

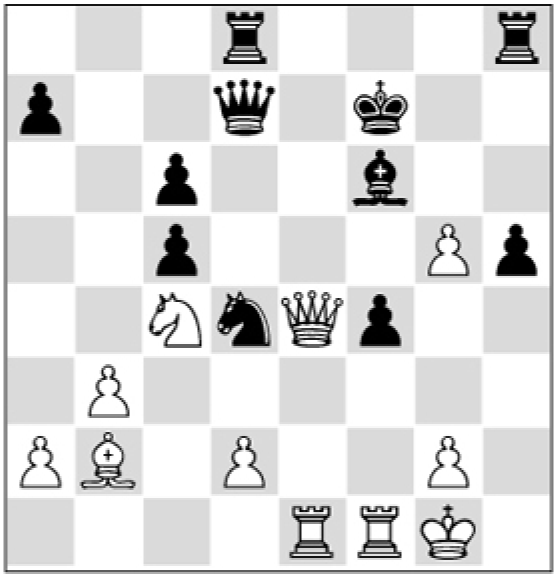
23.h4

Now the black position, undermined on all sides, collapses like a house of cards.

23…♛d7 24.exf6 ♝xf6 25.hxg5

Black resigned.

437



After 25…♗g7 26.♘e5+ ♗xe5 27.♕xe5 the black king is pathetic in his utter helplessness.

My dear colleague Kmoch – but first I must draw a character sketch of him. So, Kmoch is, of all the objective-thinking masters, one of the most objective. His is a decidedly critical mind, one that is utterly incapable of being carried away by uncritical enthusiasm (in contrast to most others, who do let themselves be carried away without first asking the ‘why’ of it). Kmoch has a mental equilibrium that we might envy him for… Anyway, he has authorized me to share with my readers that he is ‘absolutely in love’ with the game Nimzowitsch-Rosselli.

Game 30 illustrates complete restraint and may merit a place alongside the famous ‘Immortal Zugzwang Game’, Sämisch-Nimzowitsch (Copenhagen 1923). I personally appraise Game 30 even higher.

Game 30

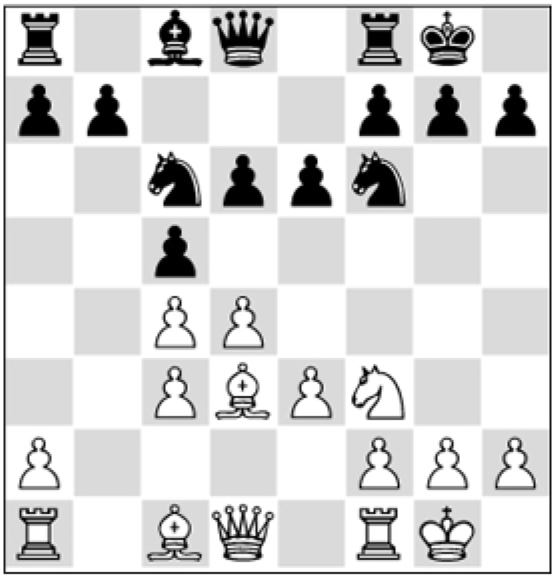
Paul Johner
Aron Nimzowitsch
Dresden 1926

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0

Black is looking to bring about the double-complex only under conditions favorable to him (cf. Game 29).

5.♗d3 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 d6

438



The prognosis for the complex at c3/c4, etc., is somewhat (but not markedly) favorable for Black. Yet after, for example, 9.e4 e5 10.d5 ♘a5 Black has purchased the ensuing blocking-up of the position none too cheaply, for his c-pawn would have been much better placed on c7 than on c5! (Cf. our comments on the double-complex in my game vs. Janowsky in Section 2 of this chapter.)

9.♘d2!

A sound plan of campaign! On 9…e5 10.d5 ♘a5, the intent of 11.♘b3 is to help the attacking a5-knight see reason.

9…b6 10.♘b3?

There was time enough for this; 10.f4 should have been played first. If then 10…e5, there follows 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.d5 ♘a5 13.♘b3 ♘b7 14.e4 ♘e8 and the weakness at c4, which now is attackable from d6 also, will be protected by ♕e2. Meanwhile, White, for his part, could use the f-file together with a2-a4-a5 as a base of operations. The game would then be about even.

10…e5! 11.f4

For, if 11.d5, then 11…e4! would now follow; e.g., 12.♗e2 ♘e5! or 12.dxc6 exd3 with advantage to Black.

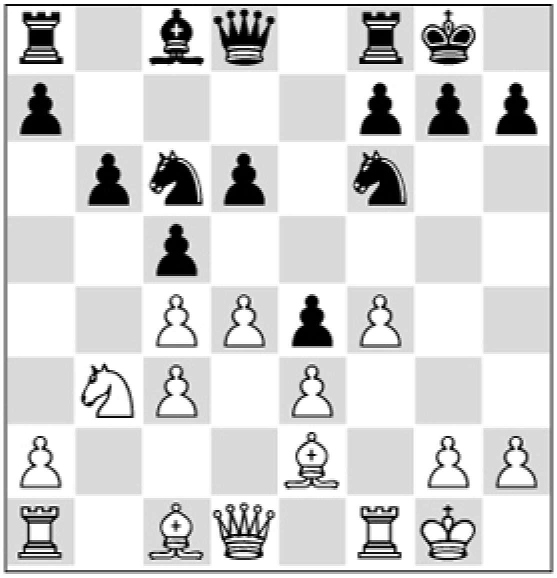
11…e4

Possible too was 11…♕e7; for if, say, 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.d5, then 13…♘d8 14.e4 ♘e8 and Black gets a strong defensive position with …

♘d6 and …f7-f6 (cf. the note to the 10th move).

12.♗e2

439

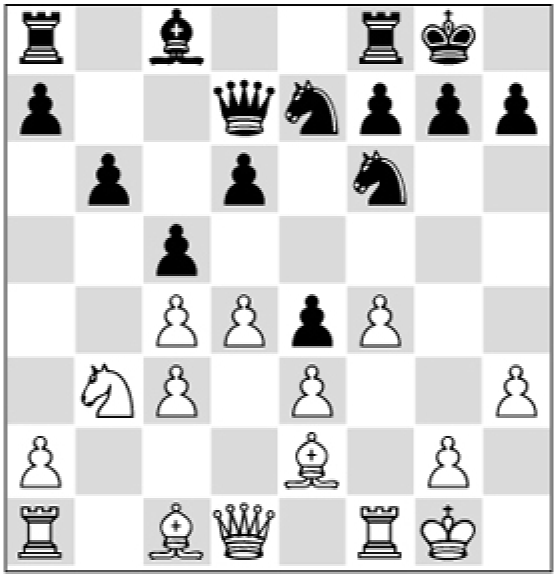


12…♕d7!

Black acknowledges the white kingside (the f-, g-, and h-pawns) as a qualitative majority. The text move involves a complicated restraining operation. A simpler plan of restraint could be achieved by 12…♘e8; e.g., 13.g4 (or 13.f5 ♕g5) 13…f5 14.dxc5! (observe the ‘dead’ bishop on c1 that we have discussed and consider further how ineffectively the white pieces are posted in terms of an attack to be launched down the g-file) 14…dxc5 15.♕d5+ ♕xd5 16.cxd5 ♘e7 17.♖d1 ♘d6, with a slightly better game for Black.

13.h3 ♞e7

440



14.♛e1

Black would also be better in the case of 14.♗d2 (to threaten ♗e1-h4) 14…♘f5 15.♕e1 (best, as Black was threatening 15…♘g3 followed by the exchange of bishops, when c4 would be especially weak) 15…g6; if now 16.g4 ♘g7 17.♕h4, then 17…♘fe8 and White’s pawn movement is completely stifled, for now the very strong …f7-f5 follows on the next move. And so always the same picture: the awkwardness of the white pieces, thanks to the doubled pawns at c3 and c4, makes it significantly more difficult to carry out any kind of attack on the kingside.

14…h5! 15.♝d2

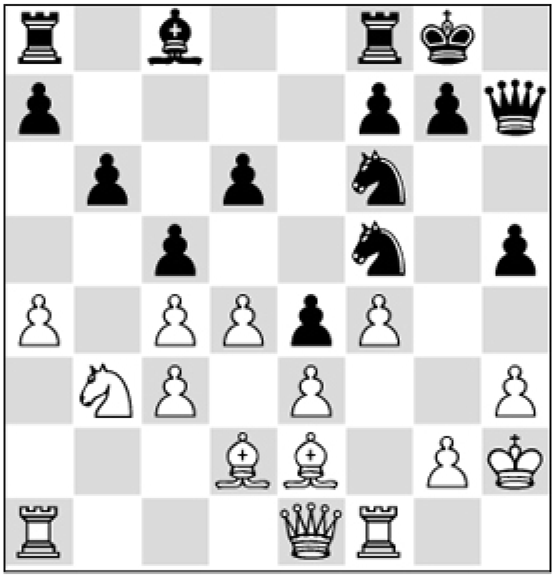
15.♕h4 does not work because of 15…♘f5 16.♕g5 ♘h7 17.♕xh5 ♘g3.

15…♛f5!

Heading for – h7(!), where it would be superbly placed, for then the crippling of White’s kingside with …h5-h4 would already be threatened. It has to be granted that the restraint maneuver …♕d7-f5-h7 represents a remarkable conception.

16.♚h2 ♛h7! 17.a4 ♞f5

441



Threatening 18…♘g4+ 19.hxg4 hxg4+ 20.♔g1 g3, etc.

18.g3 a5!

The backwardness of the b6-pawn is easy to bear.

19.♖g1 ♘h6 20.♗f1 ♗d7 21.♗c1 ♖ac8

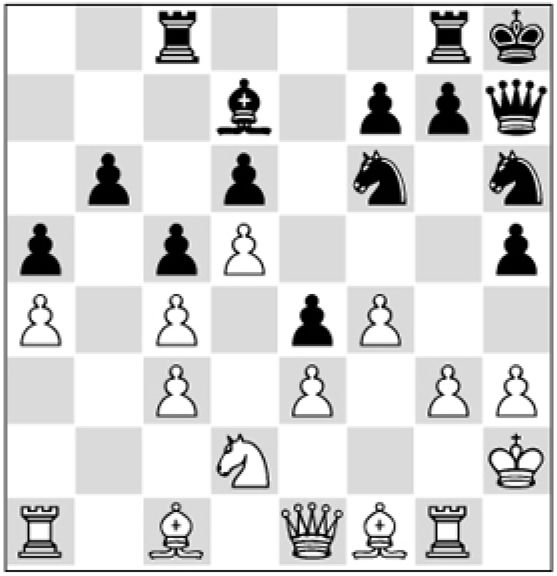
Black wants to force …d4-d5 so as to operate undisturbed on the kingside.

22.d5

Otherwise 22…♗e6 would follow and d4-d5 would be forced nevertheless.

22…♔h8 23.♘d2 ♖g8

442



And now comes the attack.

So, was …♕d7-f5-h7 already part of an attacking maneuver? No and yes. No, because the idea was intended exclusively to restrain the white pawns. Yes, for every restraining action is the logical prelude to an attack, since every immobile pawn complex tends to become a weakness and therefore sooner or later must become an object of attack.

24.♝g2 g5 25.♞f1 ♜g7 26.♜a2 ♞f5 27.♝h1

White has skilfully brought up all his defensive troops.

27…♜cg8 28.♛d1 gxf4

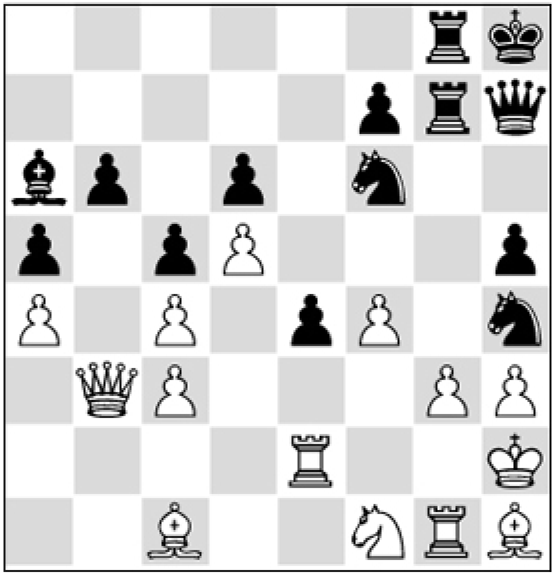
Opening the g-file for himself, but also the e-file for his opponent. The text move therefore required deep deliberation.

29.exf4 ♝c8 30.♛b3 ♝a6 31.♜e2

White seizes his chance. The e-pawn is now in need of defense. If he had played a purely defensive move, say 31.♗d2, a fine combination would have ensued, namely, 31…♖g6! 32.♗e1 ♞g4+ 33.hxg4 hxg4+ 34.♚g2 ♗xc4! 35.♕xc4 and now there follows the quiet move 35…e3!!, when the mate at h3 can be parried only by 36.♘xe3. This, however, would cost White his queen.

31…♞h4

443

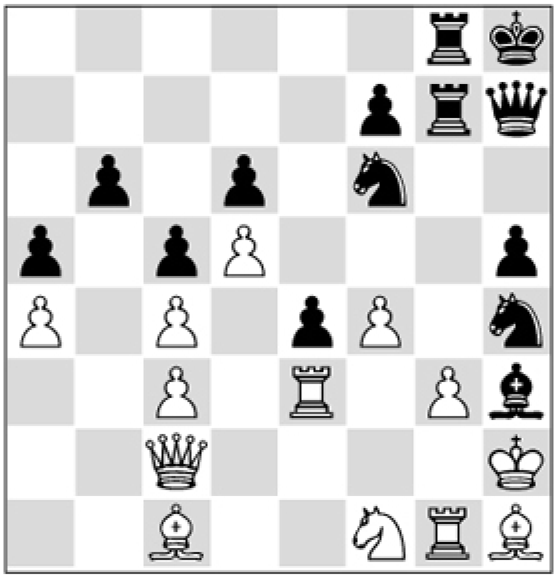


32.♖e3

Here I had of course expected 32.♘d2, for Black’s need to protect the important e4-pawn, as already pointed out, offered White his only chance. But after that move there would have followed a charming queen sacrifice: 32…♗c8 33.♘xe4 ♕f5! 34.♘f2 ♕xh3+ 35.♘xh3 ♘g4#. The point, incidentally, lies in the fact that the moves 32…♗c8 and 33…♕f5 cannot be transposed; e.g., 32…♕d5? (instead of 32…♗c8!) 33.♕d1 ♗c8 34.♕f1 and everything is protected, whereas after 32…♗c8! 33.♕d1 the move 33…♗xh3!! would sweep away the cornerstone of the white edifice (34.♔xh3 ♕f5+, etc.).

32…♝c8 33.♛c2 ♝xh3!

444



34.♗xe4

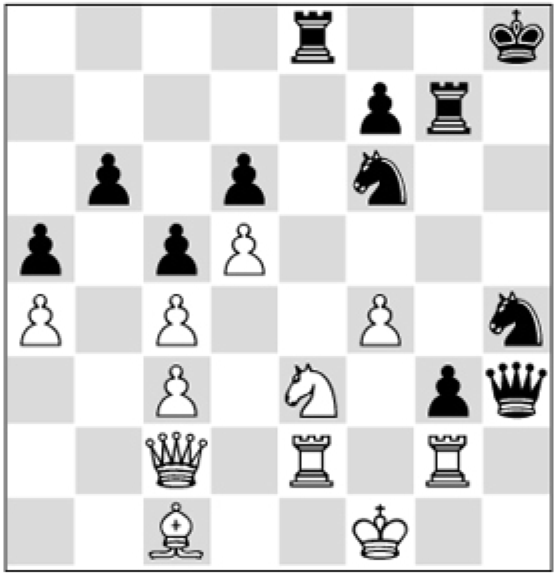
34.♔xh3 ♕f5+ 35.♔h2 would have led to mate in three moves.

34…♗f5

Best, for after this …h5-h4 can no longer be held up. After the fall of the h3-pawn the defense is hopeless.

35.♗xf5 ♘xf5 36.♖e2 h4 37.♖gg2 hxg3+ 38.♔g1 ♕h3 39.♘e3 ♘h4 40.♔f1 ♖e8!

445



A precise concluding move, for now Black threatens 41…♘xg2 42.♖xg2 ♕h1+ 43.♔e2 ♕xg2+!, against which White is powerless.

On 41.♔e1, mate would even follow by 41…♘f3+ 42.♔f1 (or 42.♔d1) ♕h1+.

One of the finest blockade games I have ever played.

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Chapter 12

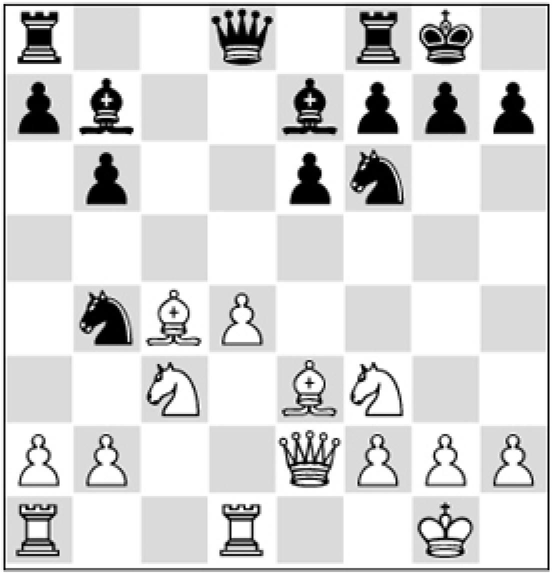
The Isolated Queen’s Pawn and Its Descendants

By ‘descendants’ we mean the isolated pawn pair at c6 and d5 and the hanging pawns at c5 and d5. We conclude the chapter with a further look at the somewhat over-valued bishop-pair.

(a) The Isolated Queen’s Pawn (Diagrams 446 and 447)

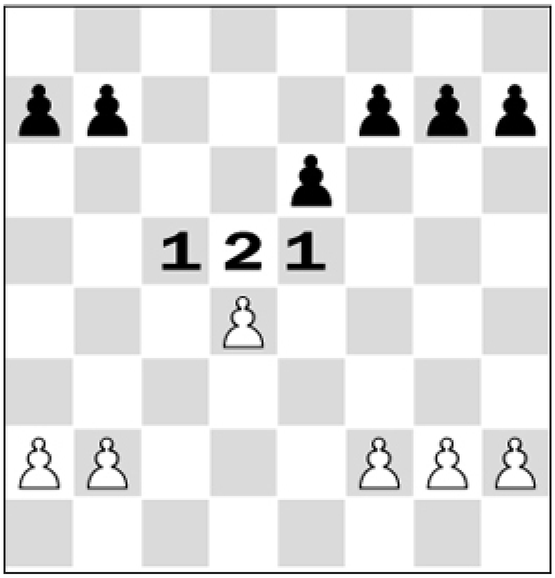
The problem of the isolated queen’s pawn is in my opinion one of the cardinal problems in all positional play.

446



The isolated queen’s pawn. Note the outpost points e5 for White and d5 for Black

447



Schema for the isolated queen’s pawn. 1 = white outpost; 2 = black outpost

We are concerned here with the appraisal of a statically weak pawn, which, however, despite its weakness, is imbued with dynamic strength. ‘Which predominates, the static weakness or the dynamic power?’ Put this way, the problem gains in significance – in fact, to some extent it moves beyond the relatively narrow boundaries of chess.

It is indispensable that the student should gain his own experience with the problem just indicated. As White he should try to reach the so-called normal position with, say, **1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.c4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.♞c3 ♞c6**. Then he should alternate the play, first with **6.cxd5 exd5 6.♝d3 cxd4 7.exd4 dxc4 8.♝xc4**, when White has the Isolani, and then with **6.cxd5 exd5 7.dxc5 ♝xc5**, when he would have to contend against the Isolani. This is excellent practice. It will serve the student well to experience for himself how dangerous the enemy Isolani can be in the middlegame, and how difficult it is to preserve his own Isolani from extinction in the endgame.

There are a few instructive perspectives, the result of my many years of investigation, that might accompany the student on his thorny path – but we cannot spare him this path, for only painful experience can help him arrive at a realistic view of these matters. ‘He who never ate his bread with tears…’

1. The dynamic power of the d4-pawn (see Diagram 447)

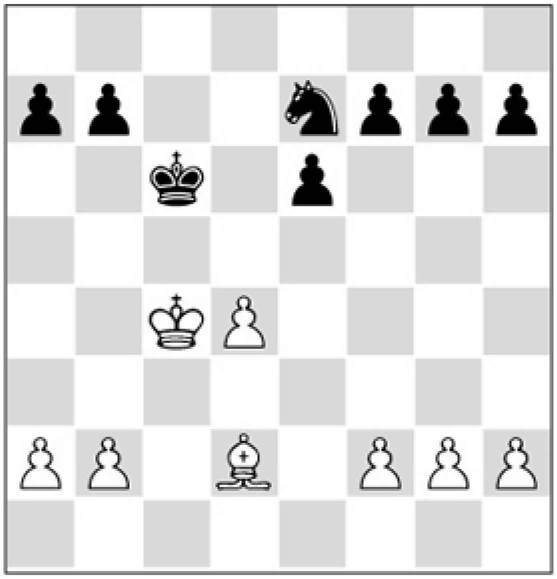
The dynamic power of the d4-pawn lies in its lust to expand (the propensity to advance with d4-d5), and further in the fact that this pawn protects, and indeed creates, White’s outposts at e5 and c5. As opposed to this, the black outpost at d5 – at least in the middlegame – does not offer full compensation, for quite apart from the arithmetic superiority (two outposts against one) White can point to the fact that a knight on e5 (Diagram 446) must have a much more incisive effect than the opposing black knight on d5 ever could. For it is evident that a knight on e5, backed up by two powerful bishop diagonals (d3-h7 and g5-f6), places the enemy kingside under pressure, and what could be ‘sharper’ than a kingside attack? This ‘linear’ examination therefore yields the first player an unquestionable advantage.

On the other hand, our pawn tends as we know to become an ‘endgame weakness.’ How are we to understand this? Is the difficulty merely this, that the d4-pawn is hard to defend, or are there still other calamities at hand?

2. The Isolani as an endgame weakness

Our judgment of the problem we have just outlined is influenced by the fact that the points e5 and c5 have to be evaluated differently in the endgame than in the middlegame. For at this later stage a kingside attack is no longer under consideration, and so White’s e5 loses some of its luster, while Black’s d5-square gains in significance. And if White has not already penetrated into c7 (say) or does not have other trumps won in the middlegame, his position has to be considered unenviable. White then is suffering not only from lack of protection for his Isolani but also from the fact that the ‘light’ squares, such as d5, c4, and e4, can become weak. Let us imagine Diagram 447 with a white king on c4 and a bishop on d2, and with a black king on c6 and a knight on e7 (Diagram 447a).

447a



Black drives the white king from c4 with a knight check, then plays …♚d5 and makes further inroads with his king (through c4 or e4). In all such cases d5 is to be viewed as the key point of Black's position. From this square Black will blockade, centralize, and 'maneuver'. The d5-square functions as an invasion route (see the example above) and as a junction point for all possible troop movements. For instance – let us now imagine Diagram 447 enlivened by the presence of rooks and knights: …♖d8-d5-a5, or …♘f6-d5-b4, and finally …♘f6-d5-e7-f5xd4. A knight posted on d5 exercises an imposing effect on both wings; a bishop at d5 not infrequently brings about a decisive result even with bishops of opposite colors (e.g., with rooks remaining on each side). Naturally, these trumps for Black can be compensated for, or White may even appear to have a surplus of compensation – for example, if one of his rooks penetrates into c7, as in our earlier example. But these cases can only be regarded as exceptions to the rule. Let us summarize:

White's weakness in the endgame in our example is based on the fact that the d4-pawn comes under threat and that the d5-point is extraordinarily strong; further, the 'light' squares d5, c4, and e4 tend to be weak, whereas the strength of White's e5 has forfeited much of its former significance.

White's pawn position was simply not 'compact', and other evils that we have already highlighted, such as a weakness throughout a complex of squares of a certain color, tend of necessity to adhere to a pawn position that is less compact (that is, broken up). We cannot recommend enough, as practical training, that the student sharpen his feeling for compact and non-compact positions. He must bear in mind, further, that it is not only the Isolani itself that tends to become a weakness but also the complex of squares surrounding it – this is the principal evil that has to be seen!

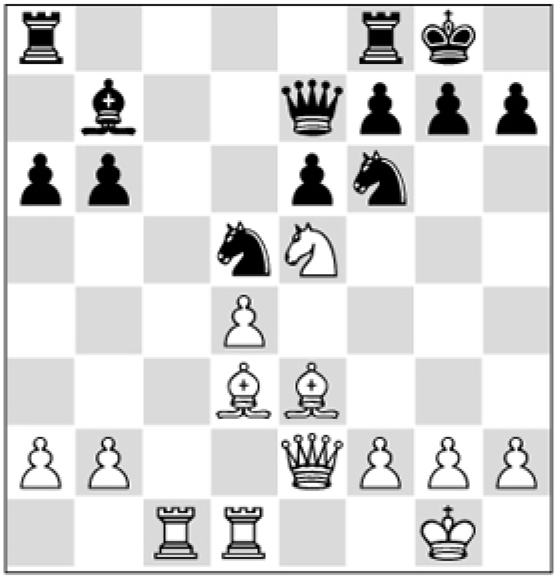
3. The Isolani as an attacking instrument in the middlegame

Solidity in the build-up of a position should, at the first sign of its neglect on the part of the opponent (e.g., when he has removed his pieces from his castled position), give way to a violent attack!

Many chess friends in possession of the Isolani proceed much too violently, but it seems to me that there is no reason for such desperate, *va banque* attacks. At first, a high degree of solidity is called for. The attack will arise in and of itself (for example, when Black has removed his f6-knight from the kingside – which is natural, since the knight wants to go to d5). In the developmental stage of the game (see Diagram 446) we therefore recommend the solid configuration with the bishop at e3 (rather than at g5), the queen on e2, and the rooks on c1 and d1 (not d1 and e1), with, in addition, the other bishop on d3 or b1 (not b3). We cannot caution the student enough against surprise attacks in the early stages, initiated perhaps by ♘e5xf7 (with a bishop on a2) or by a diversion of the rook (♖e1-e3-h3). The one and only correct plan is a solid deployment directed toward the security of the d4-pawn. (The bishop on e3 belongs to the d4-pawn as does a nurse to a suckling child!)

It is only when Black has withdrawn his pieces from the kingside, only then may White sound the attack! Then, if it pleases him, he may carry out this attack in sacrificial style.

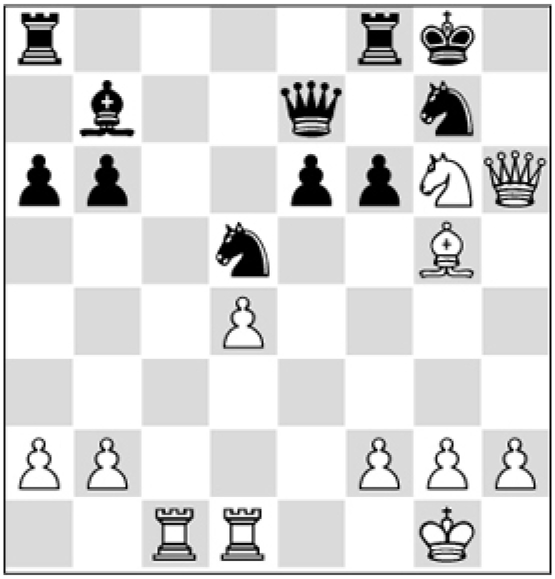
448



Nimzowitsch-Taubenhaus
St. Petersburg Masters' Tournament 1914
Black played 19…♘e8 (to go to d6). This is the 'signal' for the attack – for White. How is this attack to be commenced and how will it be carried out?

White has developed his game according to our model, and the text move 19…♘e8 gives him the chance in all such cases to go over to his eagerly sought attack on the king. In the case before us the outcome is uncertain, but since the whole manner of conducting the attack is characteristic of 'Isolani positions', we give a few variations: **19…♘e8 20.♕h5 g6** If 20…f5, then 21.♗g5. **21.♕h6 ♘g7** Or 21…f6 22.♘g4. **22.♗g5!** The pieces now come out of their reserve! **22…f6 23.♗xg6 hxg6 24.♘xg6** (Diagram 449):

449



Now there are two variations, depending on whether Black’s queen retreats to d7 or d6. In the first instance, after **24…♕d7**, besides **25.♗h4!** the combinative **25.♗xf6** is also possible; e.g., **25…♘xf6 26.♕h8+ ♔f7 27.♘e5+ ♔e8 28.♘xd7 ♖xh8 29.♘xf6+** with three pawns for the sacrificed piece. On **24…♕d6** (instead of 24…♕d7) White can continue the dance with **25.♕h8+ ♔f7 26.♕h7 fxg5 27.♘e5+**; e.g., **27…♔e8 28.♕xg7 ♕e7 29.♕g6+ ♔d8 30.♖c6**, with combinative play of a romantic color.

So, once more:

Build up a solid position, support the Isolani (♗e3!), and proceed to the attack only when a real opportunity presents itself!

4. Which cases are favorable for White and which for Black?

In general it may be said that White should strive for the two following cases:

I. When he has forced through d4-d5 e6xd5 with a piece recapturing at d5, thereby obtaining the better play due to his centralized game (Rubinstein-Tartakower, Marienbad 1925).

II. When he has built up play along the c-file; cf. Nimzowitsch-Taubenhaus (Game 31).

Black strives for:

I. All cases (ceteris paribus, of course) with a pronounced endgame character.
II. Those cases in which …♘d5xc3; bxc3 has been played, with the intent of fixing the pawn at c3 and laying siege to it (cf. Game 11, and further the note to move 15 in Game 31).

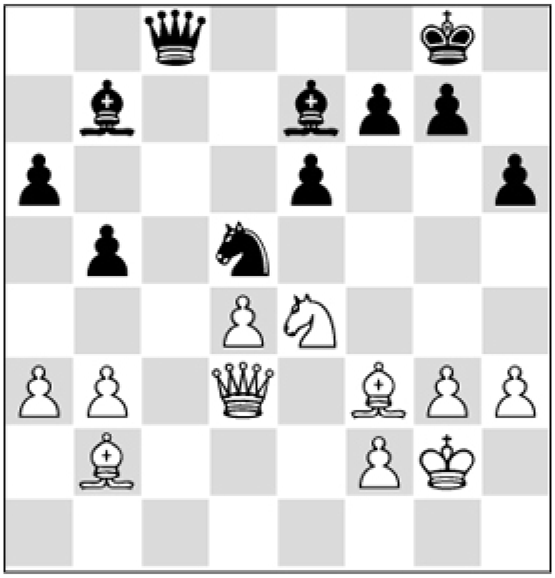
5. A few words more on the possible genesis of a reflexive weakness among the white queenside pawns

An indication of the weakness of the Isolani appears in the possibility often presented to the opponent of transferring his attack from the queen's pawn over to the queen's wing. We have already observed one such case of reflexive weakness in Game 21. The following game presents a similar picture.

A.Rubinstein-E.Lasker, Moscow 1925

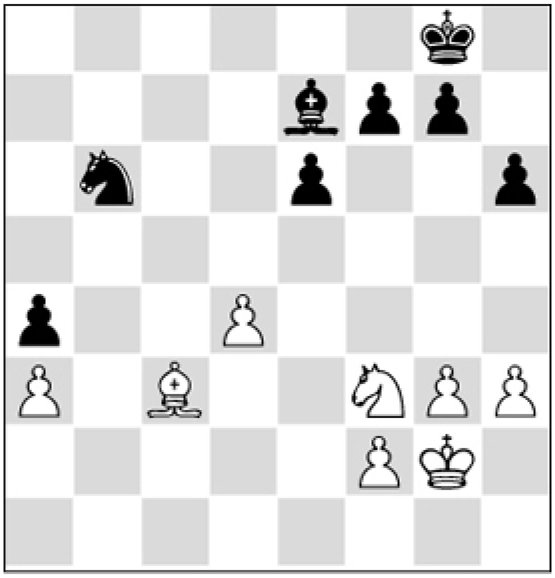
After the moves **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♞f6 4.♞c3 e6 5.♞f3 ♞bd7 6.♝d3 dxc4 7.♝xc4 b5 8.♝e2 a6 9.0-0 ♝b7 10.b3 ♝e7 11.♝b2 0-0 12.♞e5 c5 13.♝f3 ♛c7 14.♞xd7 ♞xd7 15.♞e4 ♜ad8 16.♜c1 ♛b8 17.♛e2 cxd4 18.exd4 ♜c8 19.g3 ♛a8 20.♚g2 ♜fd8 21.♜xc8 ♜xc8 22.♜c1 ♜xc1 23.♝xc1 h6** the game came down to a strategically most interesting exploitation of the weakness at d4. Play continued: **24.♝b2 ♞b6 25.h3** Since he wants to avoid the exchange of queens, 25.♕c2 ♕c8! would not avail him. **25…♛c8 26.♛d3 ♞d5!** Threatening 27…♘b4. **27.a3**

450



27…♞b6!! Now b3 has become weak. **28.♚h2 ♝d5 29.♚g2 ♛c6 30.♞d2 a5 31.♛c3** In his distress he decides after all to accede to the queen exchange, but he succumbs to the ‘reflex weakness’ that has now arisen. **31…♝xf3+! 32.♞xf3** 32.♕xf3 would fail to 32…♕c2 33.♕b7 ♘d5!. **32…♛xc3 33.♝xc3 a4!** Now the weakness of the white queenside is evident. **34.bxa4 bxa4**

451



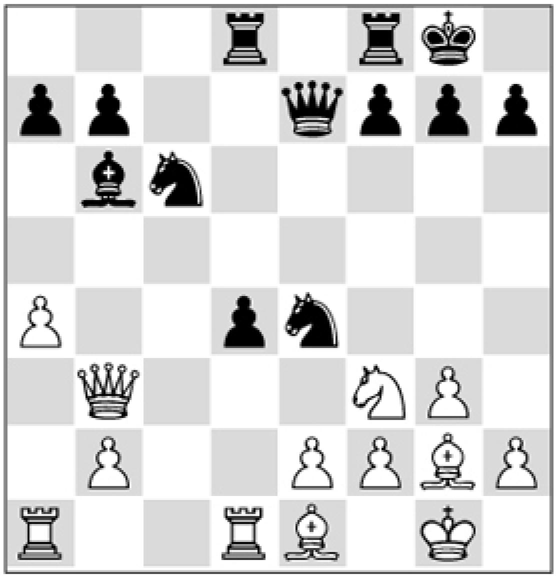
and White lost, for the attempt to save himself with 35.♗b4 comes to naught against 35…♗xb4 36.axb4 a3 37.♘d2 and now 37…♘d5!, stopping the approach of White’s king (on ♔e2, …♘c3+, etc., would always follow). What is remarkable in this superb ending, besides the 'transference' theme, is the masterful and versatile use made of the d5-square.

On the *art of besieging* the Isolani I should like to add that nowadays we no longer consider it essential to render the enemy Isolani completely immobile. On the contrary, we like to allow it some freedom of movement, giving it the illusion of freedom rather than locking it up in a cage (the principle of the large zoological garden applied to the small beast of prey, the Isolani). How this is done is shown by the following example.

Lasker (whom we count among the moderns)**-Tarrasch**, St. Petersburg 1914

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♗g2 ♘f6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♘bd2, and now the Isolani has the choice whether it will become weak on d5 or d4. Tarrasch chose the latter and there followed: **9…d4 10.♘b3 ♗b6 11.♕d3 ♗e6 12.♖d1 ♗xb3 13.♕xb3 ♕e7 14.♗d2 0-0 15.a4 ♘e4 16.♗e1 ♖ad8** Diagram 452.

452



17.a5 ♗c5 18.a6 bxa6 If 18…b6, then 19.♕a4, with the threat b2-b4. **19.♖ac1** Now all the pieces protecting d4 are in the air. The Isolani is like a man who finds himself in financial difficulties and who thought he could prevail upon manipulable people to speak on his behalf. **19…**

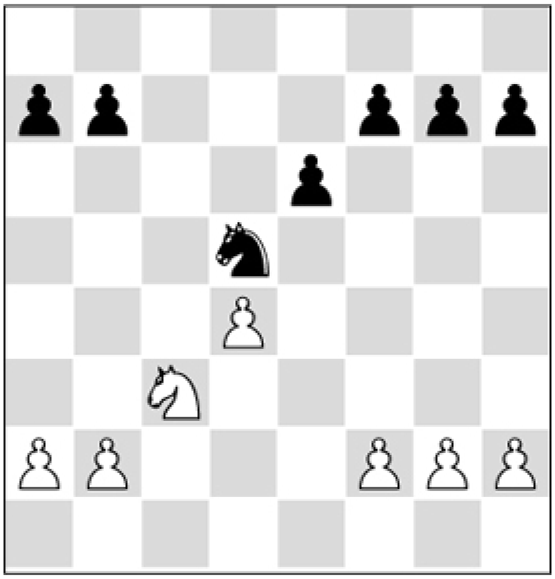
♖c8 20.♘h4 ♗b6 21.♘f5 ♕e5 22.♗xe4 ♕xe4 23.♘d6, winning the exchange.

All things considered, the Isolani constitutes a not ineffective attacking instrument in the middlegame, but in the endgame it can become quite weak.

(b) The ‘isolated pawn pair’

In Diagram 453 Black can exchange at c3.

453



The genesis of the ‘isolated pawn pair’ at c3/d4 (1…♘xc3 2.bxc3)

If in the play that follows he succeeds in holding back White’s pawns at c3 and d4, in order at some point to blockade them completely, his otherwise rather dubious strategy will have been proven correct, for to have the pawns fixed in place near the frontier line is not a little bothersome to White. The one malady in the white position, namely the obligation to keep the c3- and d4-pawns protected, will be aggravated by the other evil, his relative lack of terrain. The blockaded pawns on c3 and d4 (or, with colors reversed, c6 and d5) – and only these – I call the isolated pawn pair. An example of this can be found in our Game 11.

An essentially different picture emerges when the beleaguered partner is able to advance the c-pawn, resulting in the pawn pair at c4 and d4.

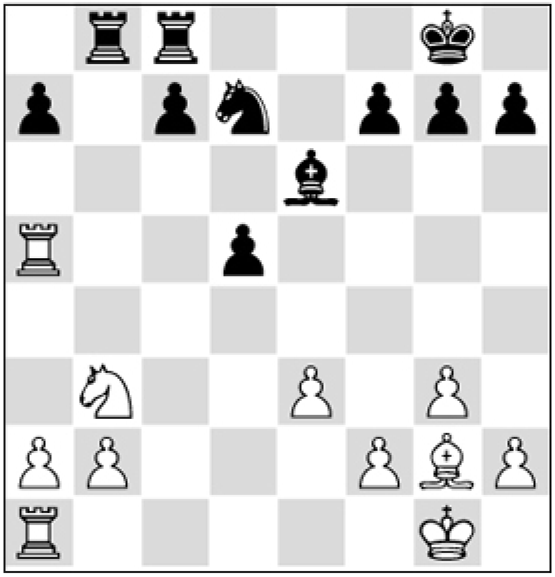
This configuration of the two pawns we no longer call the isolated pawn pair but instead the ‘hanging pawns’.
It is not difficult to choose between the generally not very mobile isolated pawn pair and the two ‘hanging pawns’. It is self-evident that the ‘hanging’ pawns are much to be preferred because they involve the creating of threats. And even when these threats are shown to be only apparent, which, by the way, would still have to be seen, a dubious initiative is always better than a passivity that is moribund beyond all doubt (as we have become acquainted with in the case of a blocked isolated pawn pair – Game 11). We may therefore take the following postulate as a rule:

RULE: **The possessor of an isolated pawn pair (Diagram 453 after 1…♘xc3 2.bxc3) must do everything in his power to make c3-c4 possible; at all costs he should not allow a pincer movement (that is, a blockade).**

The cumbersome formation c3/d4 is for him merely a transitional stage to the mobile structure c4/d4, with the eternal threat c4-c5 or d4-d5.
We now provide a case in which Black (the possessor of the isolated pawn pair) fights to push forward with …c6-c5.

Nimzowitsch-J. Giersing and S. Kinch
Copenhagen 1924
1.c4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.g3 d5 7.♗g2 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♘xd2 0-0 10.0-0 ♖b8 11.♕c2 White avoids b2-b3, as he is thinking of maneuvering via the b3-square, for example with ♘b3 or ♕a4. **11…♖e8 12.e3 ♗e6 13.cxd5** 13.♘b3 dxc4 14.♘d4 could have been considered. **13…cxd5** Black now has the notorious isolated pawn pair – for the formation c7/d5 merits the designation ‘isolated’ even more than does the formation c6/d5 – and quite rightly seeks to make …c7-c5 possible. **14.♘b3 ♕d6 15.♖fc1 ♖ec8 16.♕c5 ♕xc5 17.♖xc5 ♘d7! 18.♖a5** (Diagram 454):

454



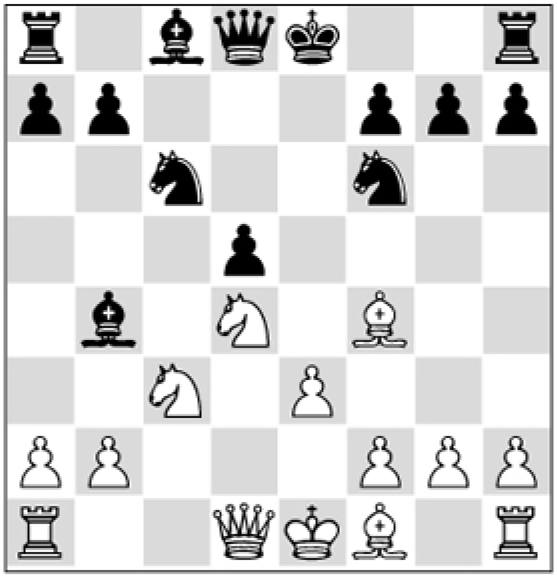
In order on the next move to establish a lasting blockade with ♖c1. **18…c5!! 19.♜xa7 c4 20.♞d4 ♜xb2! 21.♞xe6 fxe6 22.♜xd7 c3** Black has purchased the mobility of his c-pawn with a piece sacrifice! White cannot force the win. **23.♝h3 c2 24.♝xe6+ ♚f8 25.♜f7+** Possible also was 25.♗f5. **25…♚e8 26.♝xc8 ♜b1+ 27.♚g2 ♜xa1** Or 27…c1♕ 28.♖xb1 ♕xb1 29.♖f4. **28.♜c7 c1♛ 29.♜xc1 ♜xc1** with a draw agreed to at the 42nd move.

(c) The hanging pawns

Their family tree and what we can learn from it. The advance in a blocked position.

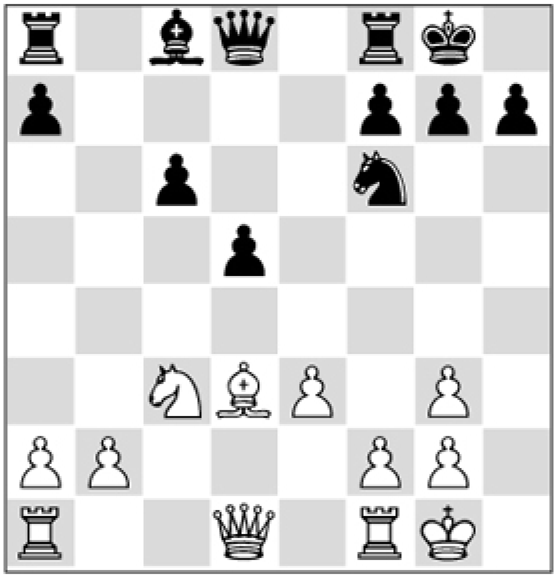
The history, or story, of the genesis of the hanging pawns is shown in Diagrams 455-457.

455



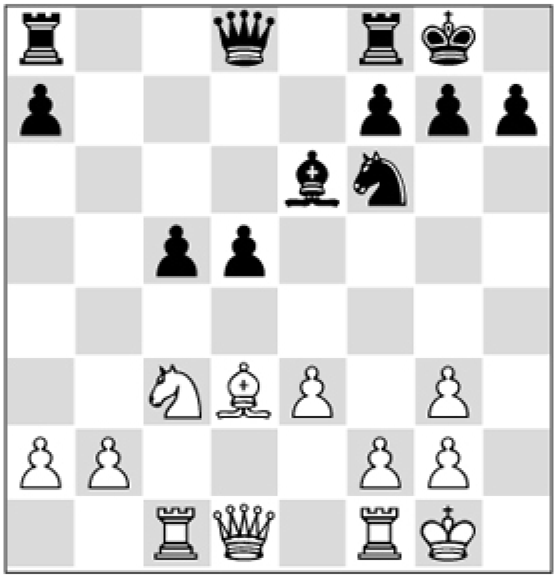
The Isolani

456



The isolated pawn pair

457



The ‘hanging pawns’

A glance at these positions shows that our intent is to trace the origin of the hanging pawns from the Isolani. The family tree of the hanging pawns leads directly to the Isolani as the progenitor.

This view, the soundness of which can be demonstrated, serves us well, for it will enable us to compare the hanging pawns, with their unclear motives, with their grandpapa the Isolani, whose motives are rather clear.

In brief, a study of the family history should help us to an understanding of *one* particularly difficult member of that family. From their grandfather, the Isolani, the hanging pawns have inherited *one* essential characteristic, namely that peculiar mixture of static weakness and aggressive strength.

But whereas in the case of the Isolani both weakness and strength stand out clearly, with the hanging pawns both are concealed. (We recall: in the case of a black Isolani at d5, the d5-pawn itself is in need of protection; further, the d4-square and its adjacent squares c5 and e5 tend to become endgame weaknesses. The strength of this pawn, on the other hand, is based on the fact that it tends to create outposts at e4 and c4, and potentially an opportune …d5-d4 has to be reckoned with.)

With respect to these highly problematical dual-natured entities there are only two things that can be regarded as established:

(1) That the two hanging pawns (for instance, in Diagram 457) are ‘unprotected’ (i.e., they are not protected by other *pawns*) and that the bombardment that will follow along the open files will, in view of the pawns’ exposure, inevitably be all the more troublesome;

(2) The fact that the possibility of obtaining a comparatively safe position – that is, reaching a position in which the two hanging pawns protect one another, say c5/d4 or c4/d5 – quite often presents itself.

From the ‘Isolani’ to the ‘hanging pawns’

A game in three pictures (Diagrams 455-457, above), from Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907.

The problem before us, however, is this: if this possibility to reach a relative security can only be bought at the cost of giving up all initiative in the center, if the pawns gaining this security can be blocked, is it not more advisable to forgo this proffered security and remain ‘hanging’?

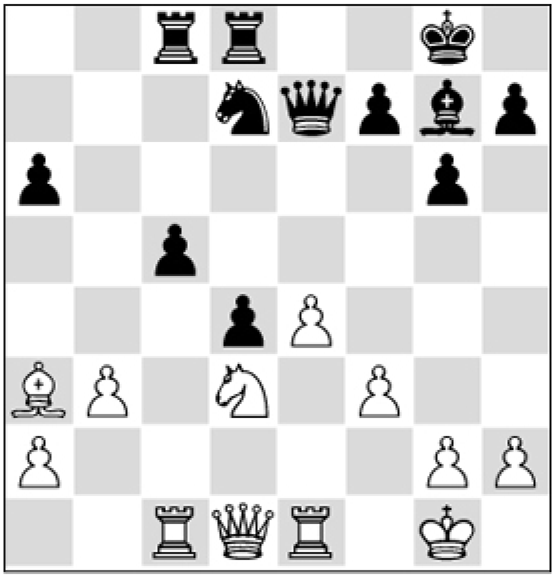
The answer to this is not easy. It depends entirely on the given circumstances, that is, on the manner and details of the resulting blockade. Talking about the ‘security’ in which a blockaded complex can cradle itself is to stretch the concept of security considerably – this notion I would like to pre-empt in advance, for blockaded pawns all too easily tend to become weaknesses. Nevertheless, in certain instances it is entirely appropriate to let the hanging pawns advance in a blocked position. These cases are as follows:

(1) The pawns in the enemy blockading ring themselves can be subject to attack (cf. the b2-pawn in Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch to follow);

(2) The blockade comes at too a high a price for the opponent – that is to say, because the apparatus needed for the blockade is too great or because the blockaders available to the opponent are for some reason unsuitable (they lack elasticity or exert too little threatening force from their positions; see Part I, Chapter 4, Section 3).

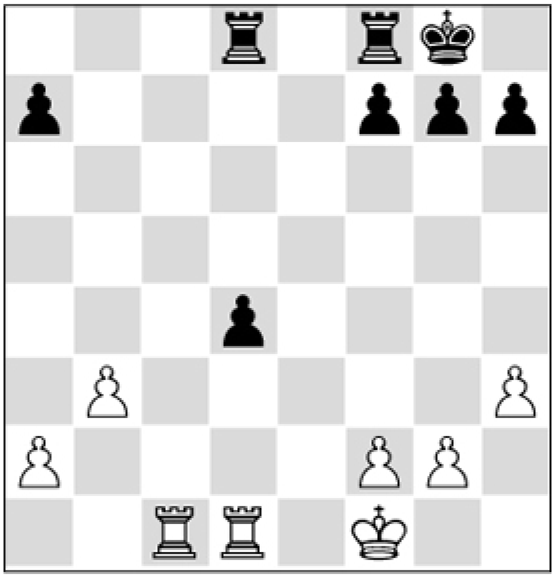
As a *counterpart* to this, we present Diagrams 458 and 459.

458



Duras-E.Cohn, Karlsbad 1911
The secure position of the hanging pawns was a very relative one. c5 is weak, though the d4-pawn is passed

459



The d4-pawn is the product of both hanging pawns, c5 and d5. Many moves ago there occurred …d5-d4; e3xd4 c5xd4. The d4-pawn is now blocked by ♔e2-d3, when White gets the advantage

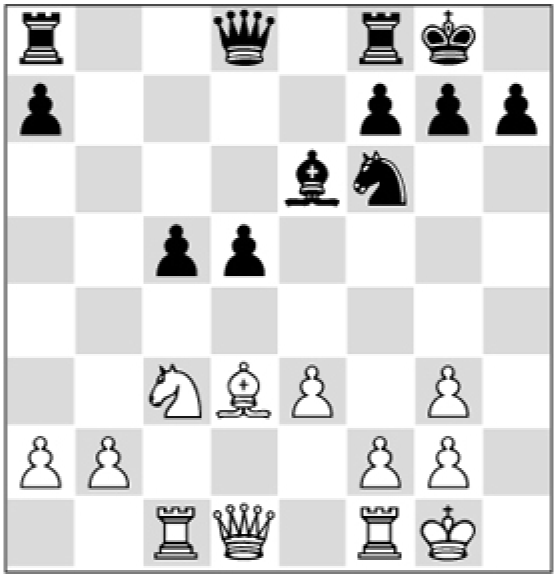
Here the ‘blockaded’ security is shown to be deceptive; the advanced pawns become weak. And again the reason for this is to be sought in the quality of the blockaders themselves. In Diagrams 458 and 459 the

knight at d3 and the king at d3 respectively are excellent blockaders, which sufficiently explains Black’s failure to save the situation.
The truth seems to lie therefore in the following statement of the case:

Just as our judgment of the white Isolani at d4 depended on the greater or lesser degree of initiative inherent in the position (the outpost point supported by the pawn is of course relevant to some extent), so too we believe we should have a certain amount of initiative in hanging pawns that are secure in their blockaded state. Complete passivity is utterly devoid of prospects.

We now give a few examples.
Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907

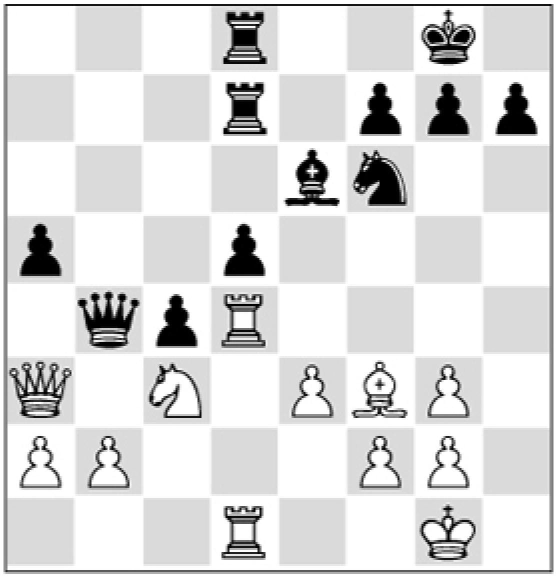
457



(reproduced)
The ‘hanging pawns’

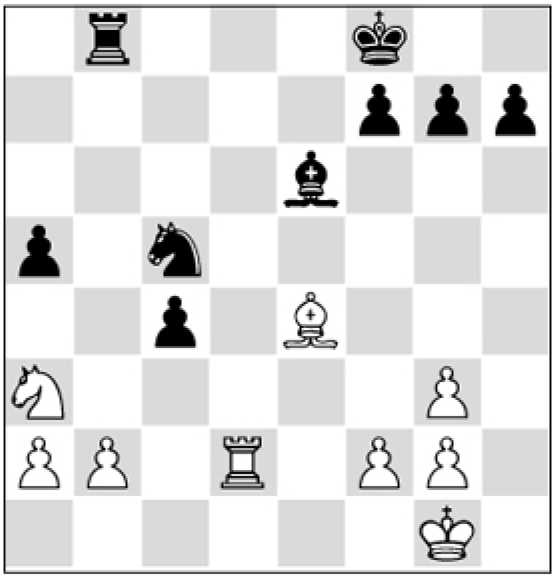
There followed **15.♕a4 ♕b6** Black ‘holds tight’. **16.♕a3 c4!** Now Black is placed in blockaded ‘security’, but in this instance the white blockade, i.e., the pawn at b2, can be attacked. Black’s advance was therefore justified. **17.♗e2 a5 18.♖fd1 ♕b4 19.♖d4 ♖fd8 20.♖cd1 ♖d7 21.♗f3 ♖ad8**

460



22.♘b1 A waiting move was better here; e.g., 22.♖4d2. **22…♖b8 23.♖1d2 ♕xa3 24.♘xa3 ♔f8 25.e4** This leads ultimately to the loss of a pawn. But White was unfavorably placed in any event. The equilibrium that still existed at the 21st move – the weakness at d5 was balanced by the one at b2 – has been disproportionately disturbed. The b2-pawn has now become quite weak, while d5 even looks almost overprotected. **25…dxe4 26.♖xd7 ♘xd7 27.♗xe4 ♘c5**

461



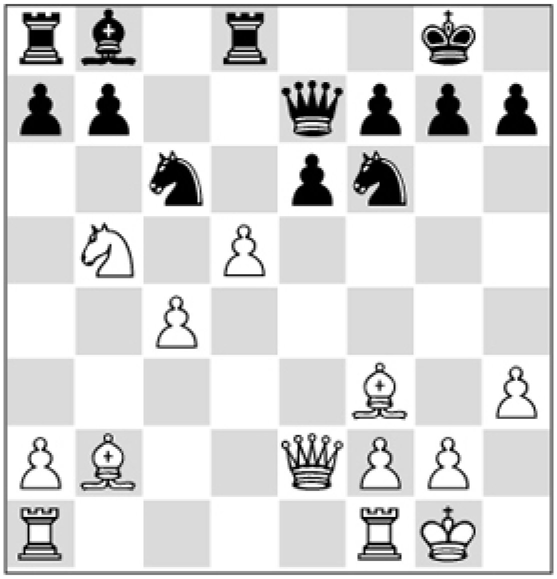
28.♖d4 Or 28.♗c6! ♖b4 29.♗d5 ♘a5 with advantage to Black. **28…♘xe4 29.♖xe4 ♖xb2 30.♘xc4 ♖b4 31.♘d6 ♖xe4 32.♘xe4 ♗xa2**

and Black won.

In master practice the move …d5-d4 (for White, d4-d5, from the hanging pawns at c4 and d4) occurs much more frequently. It leads quite neatly to the closing of a not unoriginal cycle of play from Isolani to hanging pawns to Isolani. At this point it comes down to the question whether the newly minted Isolani can maintain itself.

Nimzowitsch-Tartakower,
Copenhagen 1923
1.♞f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 ♞c6 4.♝b2 ♝g4 5.♝e2 ♛c7 6.d4 cxd4 7.exd4 e6 8.0-0 ♝d6 Black plays for the attack in a Queen’s Gambit Declined. **9.h3 ♝xf3 10.♝xf3 ♞f6 11.c4! dxc4 12.bxc4 0-0 13.♞c3** In the interest of holding tight White had the build-up ♘d2-b3 followed by ♕e2 and placing the rooks at c1 and d1. But I wanted to ‘realize’ my d4-d5. **13…♜fd8 14.♞b5 ♛e7 15.♛e2 ♝b8 16.d5** Diagram 462.

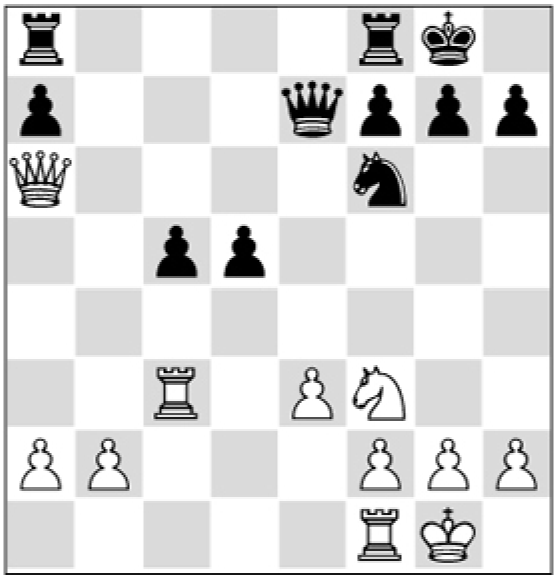
462



16…exd5 17.♛xe7 ♞xe7 18.♝xf6 gxf6 19.cxd5 ♝e5 20.♜ab1 and the d-pawn managed not only to maintain itself but throughout the further course of the game also formed a counterweight to the black majority on the queenside that was not to be underestimated. Tartakower, however, did ‘underestimate’ it, and lost.

The play from the position in Diagram 463 did not proceed so smoothly for the possessor of the hanging pawns.

463



Bernstein-Teichmann, Karlsbad 1923
Elegant pirouettes on the part of Black

There followed **17.♕a3 ♘e4 18.♖d3 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 ♕e6 20.♘d2 ♕b6 21.♘f1 ♘f6 22.♘g3 ♖ac8 23.h3 h6 24.♘e2 ♖d7 25.♘c3 ♕e6 26.♕a5 d4!** Black is tired of the eternal threat and seeks to substitute for the hanging pawns the 'blockaded security' of which we have spoken many times, but it nearly turns out very badly for him. **27.exd4 cxd4 28.♘b5** How is the newly created Isolani to be saved? **28…♕f5!** Now we see some trenchant parries. **29.♕a4! ♖c1 30.♖xc1 ♕xd3 31.♖c8+ ♔h7 32.♕c2 ♕xc2 33.♖xc2 d3 34.♖d2** The d3-pawn still appears to be in danger. **34…♘e4! 35.♖d1 ♖b7** The final liquidation! **36.♘c3 ♘xc3 37.bxc3 ♖b2 38.♖xd3 ♖xa2** Draw. The student should observe the way in which the d-pawn is indirectly defended. For the defender this stratagem offers one more chance to free himself from the misery of the isolated pawn and to arrange tidier circumstances.

Generally speaking, the 'hanging condition' should be regarded as a temporary state of affairs – it's just a matter of finding the right moment for liquidating it. In most cases the defender proceeds to do so a move or two early and does not ‘hold tight’, for the experience of being ‘in the air’ is not especially to the taste of the human psyche. Still, we must make one demand of our kindly reader: if you have it in mind to realize your hanging pawns, do not do so until you can sense behind the ‘blockaded security’ a glimmer of an initiative. Never find yourself in a dead blockaded position – it is preferable to remain ‘in the air’.

Let us move on to the two bishops.

(d) The two bishops

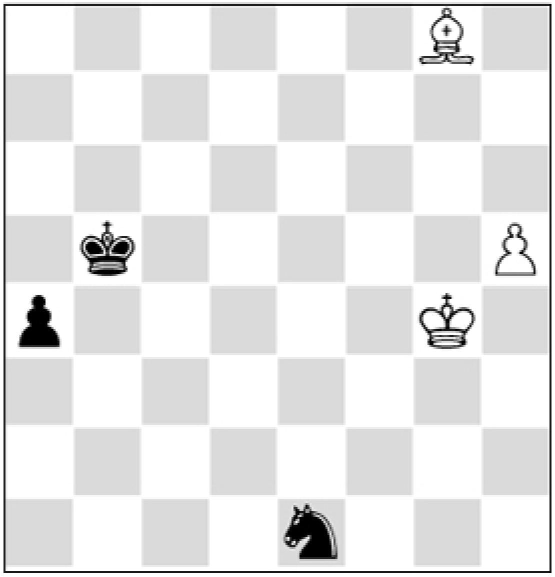
The proud bishop-pair – as the two bishops are sometimes called – is a fearsome weapon in the hands of a skilled fighter. And yet for a moment I entertained the blasphemous idea of omitting any further examination of them in my book. My system, so I said to myself, recognizes only two things that are worthy of thorough investigation: the elements and the stratagems. For instance, we regarded the Isolani, which seemed to us in some way to have grown out of the problem of restraint, as a stratagem. But under what classification do we list the proud bishops?

This question that we have thrown out is not immediately to be dismissed as an idle or trifling one; rather, it seems to us a matter of decided theoretical interest. It would lead too far afield to examine more closely the grounds on which my views of this are based, so I will simply be content to impart the end result of my thinking: I have arrived at the conclusion that the advantage of the ‘two bishops’ is to be spoken of neither as an element in our sense nor as a stratagem. For me, the two bishops are, and will continue to be, nothing more than a type of weapon.

The examination of the various types of weapons and the determination of their applicability to the various circumstances in which they find themselves lies wholly outside the scope of my book. (Berger, on the other hand, has made this theme the leitmotiv of his book on the endgame.) Nevertheless, the reader has of course the right to expect that I should make clear to him, as far as I am able, the dangers involved in facing an enemy bishop-pair. The following discussion complies with this expectation.

The superiority of the bishop over the knight is especially striking in the following class of positions. Each player has one or more passed pawns supported by their own king (Diagram 464).

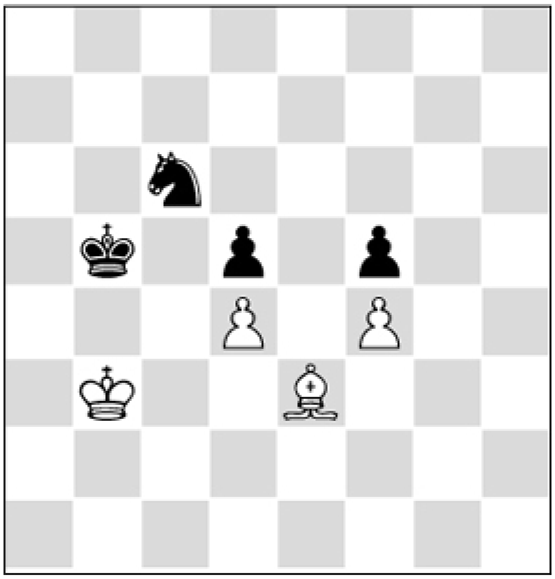
464



Superiority of the long-striding bishop over the short-winded knight. Black's game could also not be saved with the knight on c3, d4, or f8

The bishop wins because of its wonderful powers in stopping (or slowing down) the forward march of the enemy passed pawns.

465



White goes down to defeat because of the weakness of the light squares

Diagram 465, on the other hand, reveals the bishop’s main weakness, namely, it is usually helpless when it tries to defend terrain, for how could a dark-squared bishop defend light squares? Black’s advance, with puts the bishop to shame, would unfold more or less as follows (see Diagram 465): **1…♞a5+ 2.♔c3 ♚a4 3.♗f2 ♞c6 4.♗e3 ♞a7 5.♗f2 ♞b5+ 6.♔d3 ♚b3**, followed at some point by a check at b4 or b2, when the black king also wins the c4-square, etc.

We ask the reader to regard Diagrams 464 and 465 as the two poles between which all other cases move: The ability to take long strides is the advantage of the bishop, while its serious disadvantage is its weakness on squares whose color is opposite its own.

One more point! In the position with a white bishop on g2 and a pawn on c5 and with a black knight at b8 and a pawn on c6 (together with other pieces and pawns), the advantage of the bishop over the knight is as little demonstrable as its supposed inferiority would be in the position where White has a bishop at b4 and pawn at c5 and Black has a knight at e6 and a pawn on c6. In both cases it is the strategic preponderance (the advantage of an aggressive piece placement over the opponent’s passive one, which we analysed in its context) that asserts itself, not any presumed inherent superiority of the class of weapon in question.

We repeat:

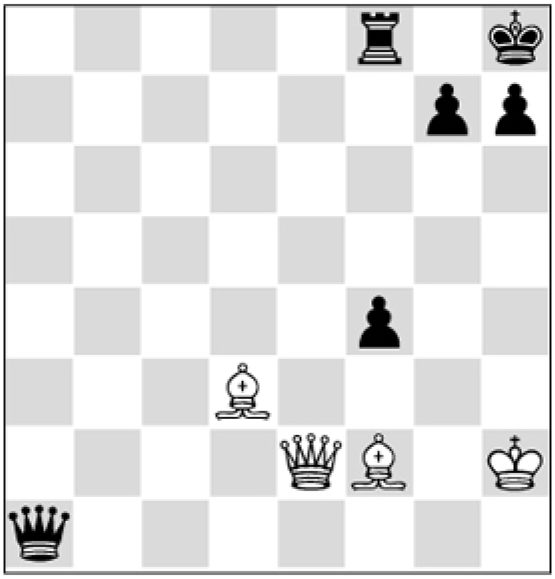
The main weakness of the bishop lies in its inability to protect squares of the opposite color. Its main strength is its long stride.

And now it suddenly becomes plausible why the two bishops should be so strong. The reason is clear: their strength is doubled, the weakness we highlighted earlier is neutralized by the ‘other’ bishop.
It is scarcely possible to set down on paper all the various situations in which the two bishops can become disagreeable. But we should like to try to note the most important.

1. The Horwitz bishops

The two bishops are known as the Horwitz bishops when they sweep two adjacent diagonals (e.g., bishops at b2 and d3) in order in unison to fire at the enemy castled position. Their effect is often devastating: the one bishop forces an enemy pawn move, and this smooths the way for the second bishop (see Diagram 466).

466



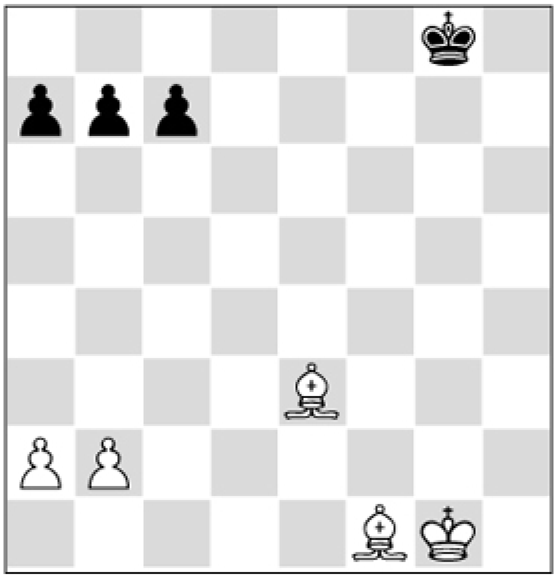
1.♕e4 lures the g-pawn forward and thereby smooths the way for the f2-bishop

1.♕e4 forces the loosening pawn move **1…g6**, whereupon the bishop on f2 intervenes with decisive effect.

Events took a similar course in the following game: **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♗c4 cxb2 5.♗xb2 ♗b4+ 6.♘c3 ♘f6 7.♘e2 ♘xe4 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.♘xc3 ♗xc3 10.♗xc3 0-0**. Black has castled and feels ‘armed to the teeth’ against **11.♕g4** (11…g6) and 11.♕d4 (11…♕g5), but he overlooks the combined play characteristic of the Horwitz bishops: **11.♕g4! g6** and only now **12.♕d4** with unpreventable mate. The contribution of the bishop at c4 is clearly to pin the f7-pawn.

Diagram 467 illustrates a sub-variety of the Horwitz bishops, and indeed one of a nobler sort.

467



Two bishops against a pawn mass, with the intent to obtain stations for themselves

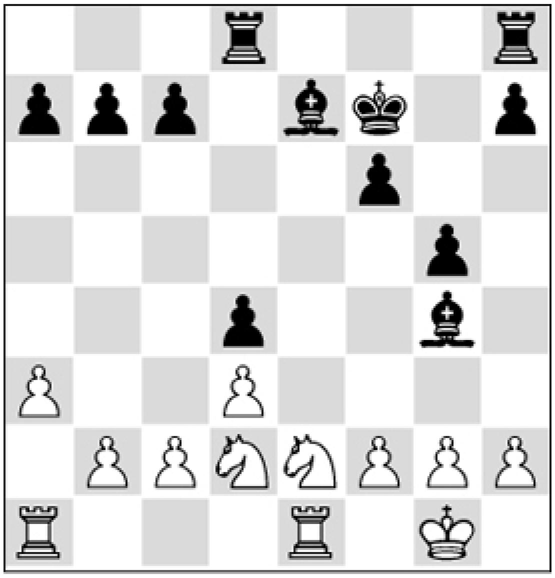
There is no trace here of a kingside attack. Yet even though it is not very intense, the attack against a7 (I have noted here only the most important pieces) is nevertheless quite uncomfortable. The second player will in the end be forced into a formation with pawns at a7, b6, and c5, when the ground will have been smoothed out for the ‘other’ bishop. For White’s follow-up will then be a2-a4 and b2-b3, his light-squared bishop now having access to positions at a6, b5, and especially c4. Also, Black’s majority seems crippled. We often find a stratagem of this kind in the games of Maroczy.

2. A pawn mass

A pawn mass, which does not have to comprise a ‘majority’, guided by a bishop-pair, can advance quite far and thus lead to the hemming-in of the enemy knights. There is also the chance of an eventual pawn breakthrough.

The well-known game Richter-Dr. Tarrasch may serve as an example (see Diagram 468).

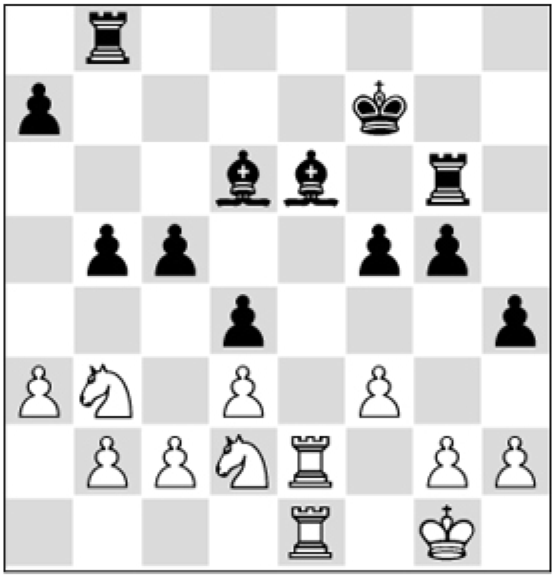
468



Tarrasch (as Black) hems in the knights

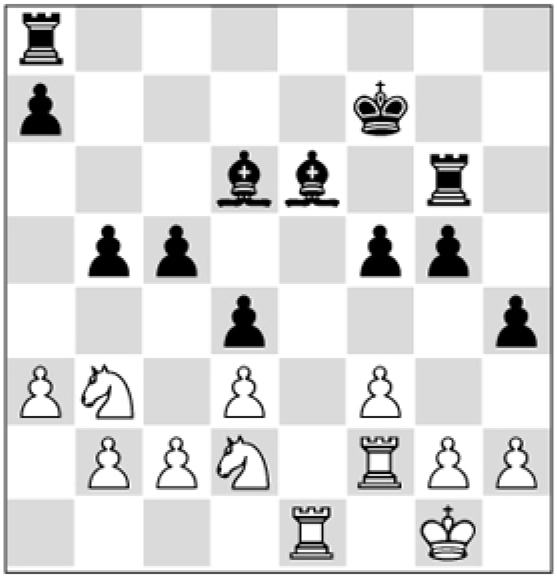
There followed **19…c5 20.♘g3 h5 21.f3** White is not defending himself with sufficient expertise. If his knights are not to go under altogether they must fight for stations for themselves. Hence 21.a4 followed by ♘c4 was required. **21…♗d7 22.♖e2? b5 23.♖ae1 ♗f8! 24.♘ge4 ♖g8** To be able to play …f6-f5. **25.♘b3 ♖c8 26.♘ed2 ♗d6 27.♘e4 ♗f8 28.♘ed2 f5 29.♖e5 ♗d6 30.♖5e2** Or 30.♖d5? ♖g6. **30…♖a8** Now the a-pawn is to advance. **31.♘a5 ♖ab8** Otherwise 32.♘b7 would render the hemming-in process null and void. **32.♘ab3 h4 33.♔h1 ♖g6 34.♔g1 ♗e6**

469



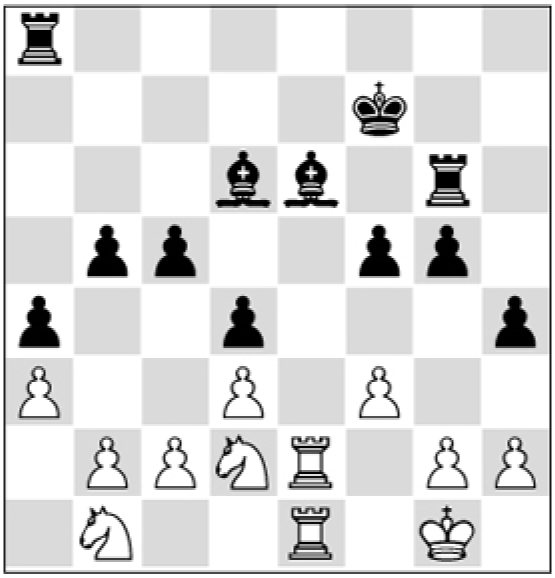
The closing-off of the e-file by the bishops on d6 and d7, up to this excellent move, has been more of an ‘ideal’ nature; with 34…♗e6 the ‘ideal’ closing-off becomes transformed into a ‘material’ value. This corresponds to the process we have observed before, where an ‘ideal’ restraint of a passed pawn gives way to a mechanical stopping (blockade) of the pawn. So much for the strategic-theoretical meaning of the maneuver chosen. The practical significance of the move lies, however, as Tarrasch himself rightly pointed out, in the fact that two new possibilities have been created for Black: I. …♔f7-e7-d7 and II. …a7-a6, …♖c8, then …♗d6-b8-a7, and finally …c5-c4. To this I would like to remark that …c5-c4 is absolutely the indicated plan in this position – why this is so can be seen in the note to White’s 38th move. **35.♖f2 ♖a8!?**

470



Black is unfaithful to his main plan and again tries to make …a7-a5 possible; he succeeds in doing so, but only because his opponent misses a subtle resource. Certainly it is a fine thing to realize the …a7-a5 advance, driving back the enemy forces completely, but one should not go so far as to subordinate a strategically indicated plan to the idea of a broader decorative effect. The pseudo-classical school in general had an incredible soft spot for decorative effect! **36.♖fe2?** A grievous mistake! How could anyone allow …a7-a5 without a fight? On 36.♘a5 Tarrasch gives the variation 36…♗c7 37.♘b7 ♗f4, winning time for …♖c8 and …a5-a4 by threatening …♗e3. But he overlooks a hidden resource: (37…♗f4) 38.♘xc5! ♗e3 39.c4! and Black cannot win, as the white queenside is strong and the 'dark' points, e.g., c5 for the knight, are no less so. A plausible variation would be (39.c4!) 39…bxc4 40.dxc4 ♖c8 41.b4! ♖c7 42.♔f1 ♗xf2 43.♔xf2 and White stands well. **36…a5 37.♘b1 a4 38. ♘3d2**

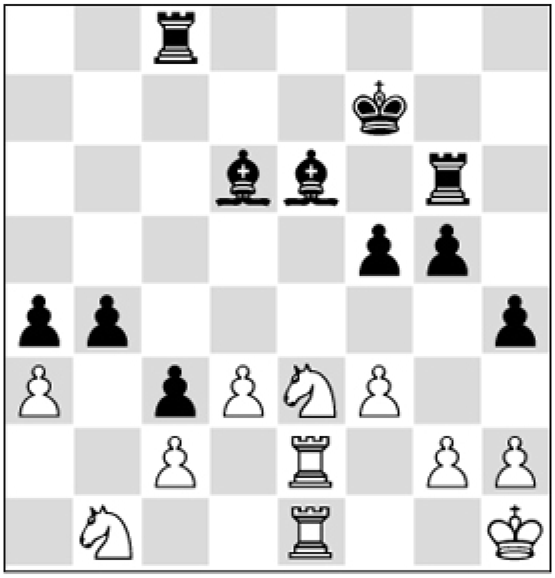
471



A successful hemming-in

Now the breakthrough follows; logically, there is nothing surprising in this, for, as we know, Black has a pronounced, qualitative majority (imagine adding a pair of pawns to the position, a white pawn at e4 and a black one at e5, when the qualitative majority would be quite obvious). But here the possibility of a breakthrough is even supported – that is, due to the miserable position of the knight and because of the wide surface of friction – I mean the four-pawn front. **38…c4 39.♘f1 ♖c8 40.♔h1 c3 41.bxc3 dxc3 42.♘e3 b4** Diagram 472.

472



The whole thing plays itself. White gave up on the 47th move.

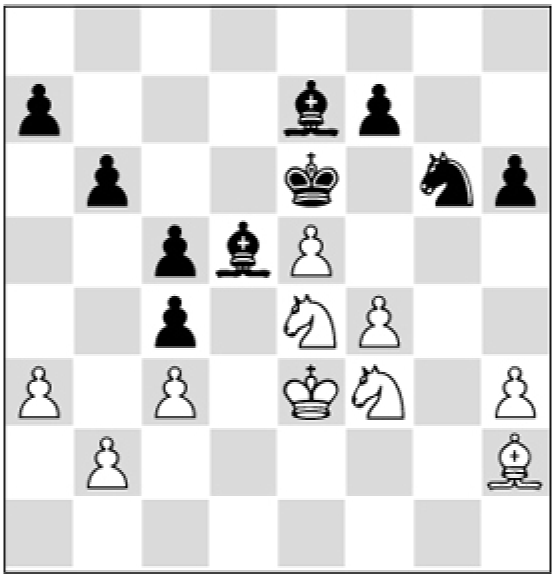
3. Hemming-in the knights while conducting an attack against the pawn majority

This is quite a difficult problem, it might be said – one requiring outstanding technical ability. But this is not so. Anyone even moderately adept at hemming-in and blockading the enemy pawn complex will soon find to his satisfaction that in the class of positions in question the hemming-in of the knights is easier to accomplish than the process seen in Section 2, above. We can say with a certain degree of justification that the hemming-in of the pawn majority, once achieved, automatically carries with it the restriction of the knights. That is to say, the blockaded pawns can easily become obstructions to their own knights.
Let us look at the following example game.

Harmonist-Dr. Tarrasch, Breslau 1889

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♗g5+ ♔e8 10.♘c3 h6 11.♗f4 ♗e6 The white majority has little mobility. **12.♖ad1 ♖d8 13.♘e4 c5 14.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 15.♖d1+ ♔c8 16.h3 b6 17.♔f1 ♗e7 18.a3 ♖d8 19.♖xd8+ ♔xd8** The wholesale exchange of rooks has increased the effective radius of Black’s king to a not insignificant extent. **20.c3 ♗d5 21.♘fd2 ♔d7 22.♔e2 g5 23.♗h2 ♘h4 24.g3 ♘g6 25.f4 ♔e6 26.♔e3 c4 27.♘f3 gxf4+ 28.gxf4 c5** See Diagram 473.

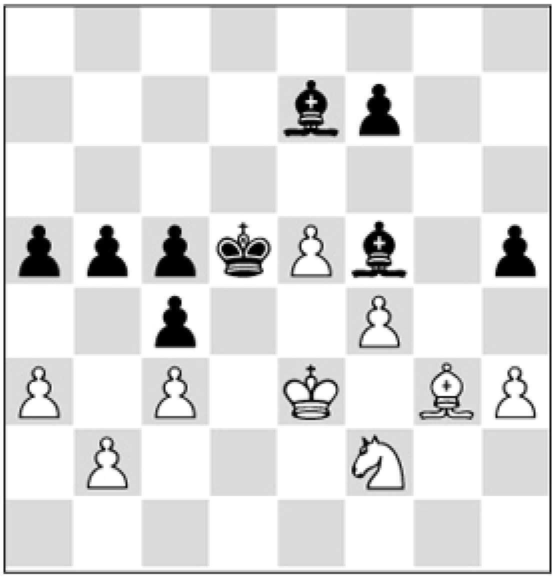
473



Harmonist-Tarrasch, Breslau 1889

In the position now before us, White’s pieces are fairly well confined. This fact, a happy one for Black, has almost automatically resulted from the successful blockade carried out against the e5-pawn and in particular the f4-pawn. This cannot surprise us – we have often experienced how the blockade can effect the whole rest of the situation, as if by a miracle. **29.♘g3 ♘h4 30.♘xh4 ♗xh4 31.♘e4 ♗e7 32.♗g1 ♗c6** Intending …♔d5 followed by …♗d7-f5, further driving back the knight. **33.♗f2 ♗d7 34.♗g3** 34.♘d6, playing for bishops of opposite colors, offered drawing chances. **34…♔d5 35.♘f2 h5 36.♔f3 ♗f5** Blockade! **37.♔e3 b5 38.♔f3 a5 39.♔e3**

474



White is ‘stalemated’. **39…b4 40.♔f3 ♔c6 41.axb4** White is lost. **41…cxb4 42.cxb4 axb4 43.♘e4 ♔d5 44.♘d6 ♗xd6 45.exd6 c3 46.bxc3 b3**

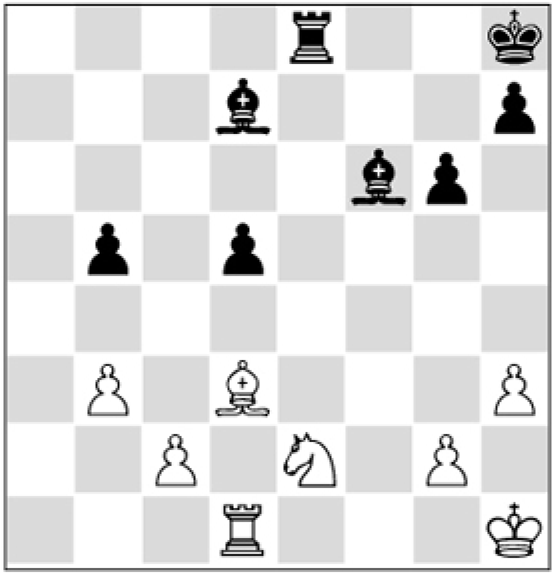
0-1

4. The two bishops in the endgame

The stronger aspect of the two bishops, as we defined more precisely above, appears when they are combined. We regard as an ideal the successful transmutation of an advantage based entirely on the class of weapons into a clearly perceptible strategic advantage, for example, an aggressive placement of pieces vs. a defensive deployment on the part of the opponent (see Part I, Chapter 6, Section 2). This combined play with the two bishops, leading to the aforementioned transmutation as an ideal, will become clear in the following example.

Michell-Tartakower, Marienbad 1925

475



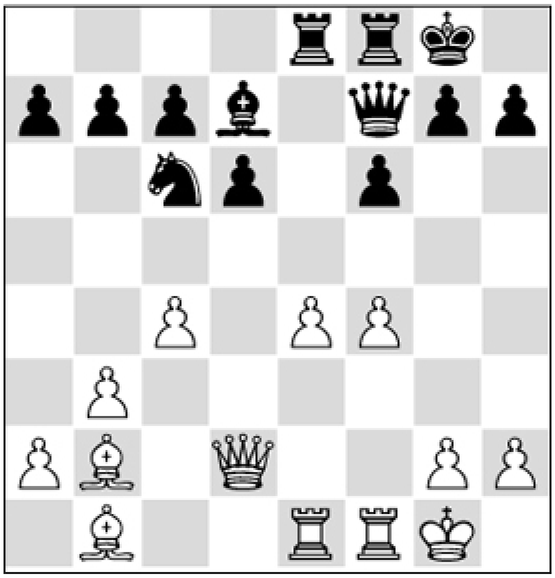
Tartakower, as Black, realizes the several chances (one after the other) offered to his bishops

White is well consolidated; the weakness of the squares c3 and d4 seems inconsequential. **40.♔g1 ♔g7 41.♔f1 ♗c6 42.♘g1 g5 43.♘f3 h5** Both pawns advance, as they feel themselves to be a qualitative majority in view of the exalted protection they enjoy – they are supported by the two bishops! **44.♗e2 ♖e4! 45.♗d3 ♖f4 46.♔e2 g4 47.hxg4 hxg4 48.♘h2 g3! 49.♘f3** Black quite rightly has not pursued further the advantage he has gained by hemming in the knight. What he now possesses is of greater value: the g2-pawn has become an object of attack and the white pieces, especially the knight at f3, are forced to keep watch over this pawn for the duration (see Part I, Chapter 6, Section 2). This strategic advantage brings a quick decision. **49…d4 50.♖f1 b4 51.♘d2 ♖h4 52.♘f3 ♖h8!** From here the rook menaces both the h2-square and the e-file. **53.♔d2** ‘Where good moves are lacking, a blunder appears at just the right moment!’ **53…♖h2! 54.♘xh2 gxh2 55.♖h1 ♗e5 56.♗f1 ♗e4** A charming position! **57.♔d1 ♔f6 58.♔d2 ♔g5 59.♔e1 ♔g4**

0-1

We have done enough to glorify the two bishops. We might add a few words about those situations where they do not come off so well. These are the wholly or half-closed positions; see for example Game 33 (in the next chapter). Against an unassailable centralized knight the bishops are surprisingly weak. Even in the position in Diagram 476 (below) it seems to me that Black can hold out against the Horwitz bishops.

476



Black’s position strikes us as defensible

Game 31

Aron Nimzowitsch
Jean Taubenhaus
St. Petersburg 1913

Illustrating the Isolani.

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♗xc4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗e3

10.d5 would be bad because of 10…♘a5 11.b3 ♗b4. Unreliable also would be 10.♗g5; e.g., 10…b6, etc.

10…b6

10…a6 followed by …b7-b5 would unnecessarily weaken the c5-square.

11.♕e2 ♗b7 12.♖fd1 ♘b4 13.♘e5 ♖c8 14.♖ac1 ♘bd5 15.♘b5

A strategic conception worthy of note. White says to himself, ‘In the center I am strong and firm, so a diversion is strategically justified. Moreover, I have no desire to end up with the hanging pawns after a possible 15.♗a6 or 15.♗d3.’ Objectively correct, however, was 15.♗a6; e.g., 15…♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♕c7 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7 18.c4 followed perhaps by a2-a4-a5.

15…a6

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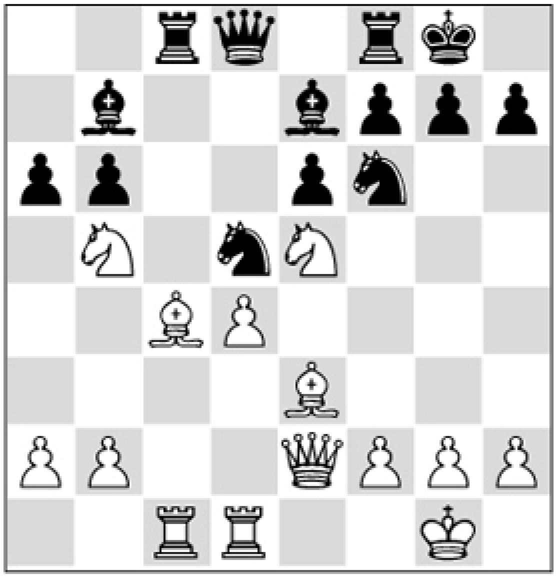

16.♘a7! ♖a8

If 16…♖c7?, then 17.♗xa6.

17.♘ac6 ♕d6 18.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 19.♗d3! ♘xe3

There was no reason for this. Black could have considered: I. 19…a5 followed by …♖fc8; or II. 19…♖fd8 followed by …♘d7 and …♘f8. On 19…♘e8, see the note to Diagram 448.

20.fxe3 b5

This weakens the c5-square. After 20…a5 (instead of the text move) followed by …♖fc8 there would be little wrong with Black’s position.

21.♖c5

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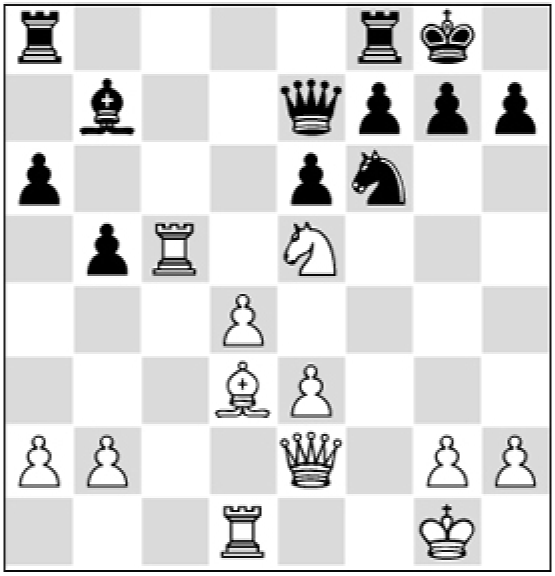


By occupying this outpost point White gets play along the c-file.

21…♜fc8 22.♖dc1 g6 23.a3

What follows now could serve as a textbook example of play along an open file. The slowness by which White successfully wins additional terrain is also significant from the standpoint of positional play.

23…♞e8 24.b4 ♞d6

If 24…♕g5, then 25.♘xf7!.

25.♕f2 f5

To relieve f7 and to make 25…♕g5 possible.

26.♕f4 ♞e8

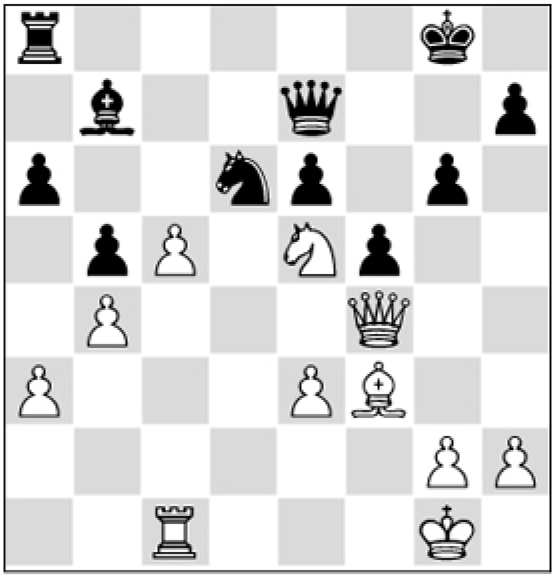
Black cannot undertake anything.

27.♗e2! ♞d6 28.♗f3

Breaking the resistance on the c-file.

28…♜xc5 29.dxc5

479



29…♘e8

If 29…♘e4, then 30.c6! g5 31.cxb7 ♖f8! 32.♖c8 and wins.

30.♖d1 ♘f6 31.c6

The c-pawn, the fruit of the operations on the queenside, now decides the game.

31…♗c8 32.c7 ♖a7 33.♖d8+ ♚g7 34.♖xc8 ♖xc7 35.♘xg6

Black resigned.

Game 32

Akiba Rubinstein
Evgeny Znosko-Borovsky
St. Petersburg 1909

This game, devoted to the hanging pawns, is quite characteristic of these, although only in a very special sense. Namely, it shows the terrible dangers to which the hanging pawns are exposed right at birth. ‘Infant mortality’ is in the present case comparatively very high and significantly exceeds the mortality rate of grown-up hanging pawns (which if worst comes to worst can opt for a ‘blockaded security’).

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0-0 7.♕c2 b6

Here 7…c5 is possible; e.g., 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♗xe7 ♕xe7 10.♘xd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 and the Isolani doesn’t seem so bad.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.0-0-0 ♘e4 11.h4 f5 12.♚b1 c5

The correctness of this move stands and falls by the accuracy of the pawn sacrifice recommended in the next note. Solid and good instead of the text move is the move recommended by Dr. Lasker, 12…♖c8, e.g., 13.♕b3 ♘xc3+ followed by …c7-c5. Less solid, but not too bad, appears 12…h6, for example: 13.♗f4 ♗f6 14.♗xd6 cxd6.

13.dxc5

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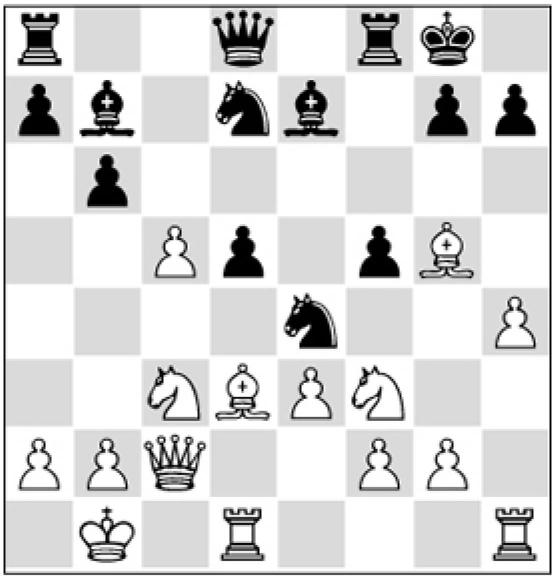

13…bxc5

Here, 13…♖c8 was possible. On 14.cxb6 ♘xb6 Black would have attacking chances, and if 14.♘d4, 14…♘dxc5 could be played. In either case the outcome of the game would have been in question, whereas now Black is lost beyond doubt. Note, by the way, the variation 13…♘xd5 14.♘xd5! ♗xd5 15.♗c4 and wins.

14.♞xe4! fxe4 15.♝xe4 dxe4 16.♛b3+ ♚h8 17.♛xb7 exf3 18.♜xd7 ♛e8 19.♜xe7 ♛g6+ 20.♚a1 ♜ab8

The storm has not only blown away the hanging pawns, a piece has also gone with it. Black’s desperate attack is beaten back with little trouble.

21.♛e4

Lasker praises this move, but 21.♕d5 also seems adequate; e.g., 21…fxg2 22.♕xg2 ♕c2 23.♗f6!. In this position, may roads lead to Rome.

21…♛xe4 22.♜xe4 fxg2 23.♜g1 ♜xf2 24.♜f4 ♜c2

On 24…♖bxb2 there follows 25.♖f8+!, winning outright.

25.b3 h6

There followed

26.♝e7 ♜e8 27.♚b1 ♜e2 28.♝xc5 ♜d8 29.♝d4 ♜c8 30.♜g4

and Black resigned.

A sterling example of play with the bishop-pair can be found in Game 36.

We now turn to over-protection.

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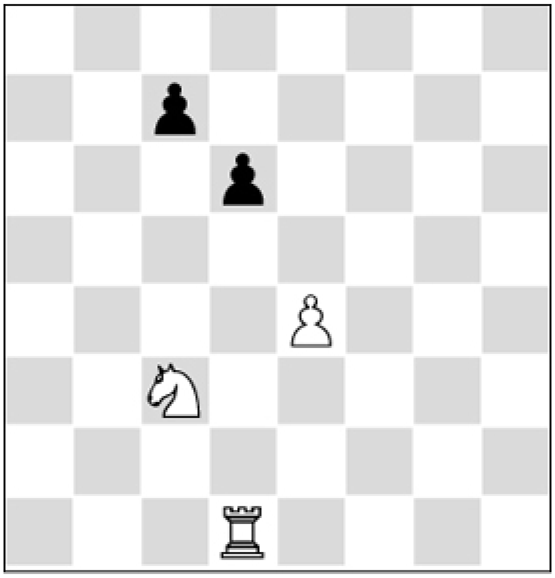
Chapter 13

Over-Protection and Weak Pawns

How we should systematically over-protect our own strong points, and how we should go about getting rid of weak pawns or points.

A short chapter that may serve primarily to illustrate the various forms under which ‘over-protection’ can appear. The spirit and deeper significance of over-protection we have already sought to elucidate in Chapter 10. We shall therefore repeat here only briefly that the contact established between the strong point and the ‘over-protector’ can only be of benefit to both parties: to the strong point because the prophylaxis brought to bear on it affords the greatest security conceivable against any kind of attack; to the over-protectors because the ‘point’ becomes a locus of energy for them from which they can continually draw new strength.

Over-protection clearly represents a maneuver that in its whole essence must have developed in close connection with positional play. Even so, already in the ‘elements’ we come across traces of overprotection, for example in the discussion of the open file. See the following diagram.

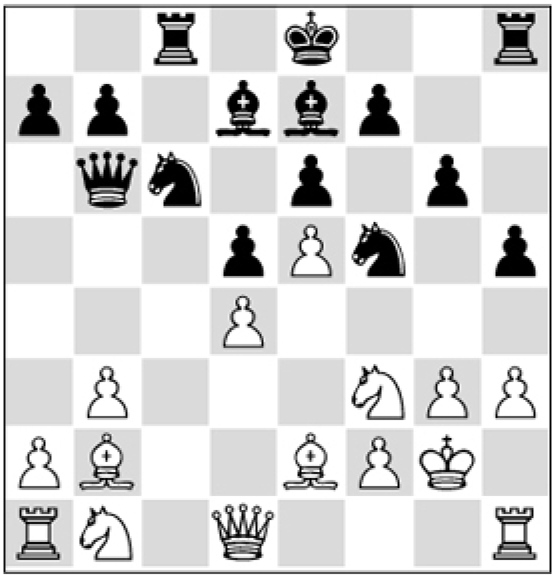


The outpost knight (after ♘d5) must be protected by both the rook and pawn. What does this constraint signify but the need to over-protect the strategically important outpost!
In the realm of the pawn chain, too, over-protection constitutes a stratagem to be adopted preferentially. Just play through the game Nimzowitsch-Giese (Diagram 342) and notice especially how over-protection was not even directed at the base of a pawn chain (a strategy that instills in us an infernal respect) but rather merely at a humble pawn that 'aspired' to be a base. For we had over-protected the e5-pawn, since we always had to reckon with an eventual and unavoidable d4xc5, when the e5-pawn would then be promoted to the base.

The wonderful vitality of the over-protector may be demonstrated here with two further examples.

I. **Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein**
Karlsbad 1911
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 ♛b6 6.♝d3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♝d7 8.♝e2 ♞ge7 9.b3 ♞f5 10.♝b2 For now, the d4-pawn is barely protected, not more. **10…♝b4+ 11.♚f1 h5 12.g3 ♜c8 13.♚g2 g6 14.h3 ♝e7** Intending to answer a potential g3-g4 with …♘h4+. Diagram 481.

481



15.♕d2! a5 16.♖c1 ♝f8 17.♕d1! ♝h6 18.♖c3 0-0 19.g4 ♞fe7 20.♘a3! Only now does it become clear why White deferred the development of this knight. An honorable post has been earmarked for it, as an over-protector of d4. **20…♞b4 21.♘c2** There now follows an astonishingly effortless unraveling of White’s tangle of pieces on the queenside. **21…♖xc3 22.♗xc3 ♞xc2 23.♕xc2 ♖c8 24.♕b2!** Whatever happens, the d4-pawn is and will remain over-protected. **24…♝b5 25.♗xb5 ♛xb5 26.♗d2!** The over-protector shows its lion’s claw! **26…♝f8 27.♖c1 hxg4 28.hxg4 ♜c6 29.♕a3** Over-protector number two will not take a back seat! **29…♜xc1** Too bad, for on 29…♘f5 White planned to sacrifice his queen; e.g., 30.♖xc6 ♗xa3 31.♖c8+ ♔g7 32.gxf5, with a strong attack. An excellent indication of the inherent resilience of the over-protector. **30.♕xc1**

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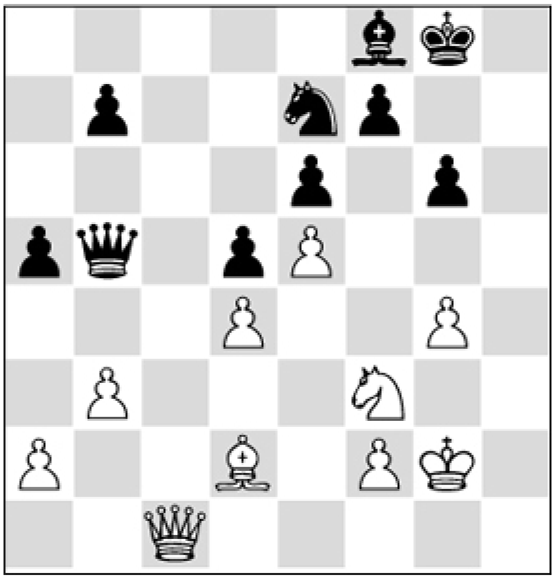

with the superior game for White.

II. **Nimzowitsch-Spielmann**
Stockholm 1920

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.c3 ♕b6 6.♗e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘h6 8.♘c3 8.b3, as in the previous example, looks more circumspect. **8…♘f5 9.♘a4 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♗b4 11.♗c3 ♗d7** Deserving preference was 11…♗xc3+ 12.♘xc3 ♕b4 (12…♕b6? 13.♘a4!) 13.♗b5 0-0 14.♗xc6 ♕xb2 15.♘a4 ♕b4+ 16.♕d2. White would then have had the point c5, Black an extra, backward pawn. **12.a3 ♗xc3+ 13.♘xc3 h5 14.0-0 ♖c8**

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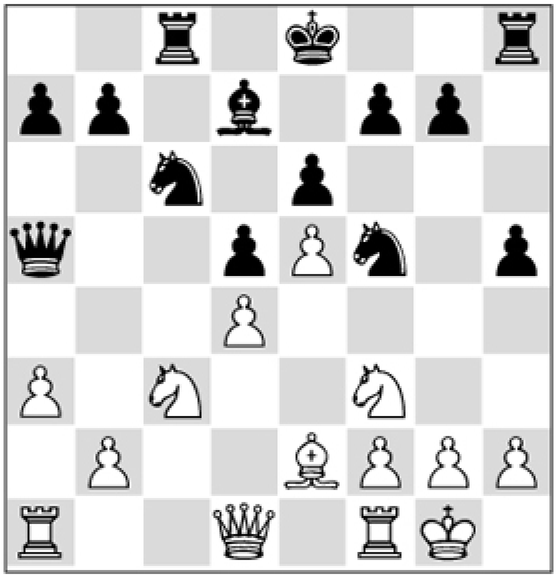

White now develops his pieces for the purpose of a systematic over-protection of d4

15.♛d2! ♛d8 Threatening …g7-g5! **16.h3!** To be able to counter …g7-g5 with the counter-stroke g2-g4; e.g., 16…g5 17.g4 hxg4 18.hxg4 ♘h4 19.♘xh4 ♖xh4 20.♔g2 and ♖h1, with advantage to White. **16…♞a5 17.♜ad1! ♛b6 18.♜fe1** The d4-pawn, and to a certain extent too the e5-pawn, are now systematically over-protected, and this strategy makes it possible later on for White to become, as it were, automatic master of all complications, whatever they may prove to be. **18…♞c4 19.♝xc4 ♜xc4 20.♞e2 ♝a4 21.♜c1** Note how applicable the over-protector is in all directions – for example, the rook at d1 to c1 and the knight on e2 to g3. **21…♝b3 22.♜xc4 ♝xc4 23.♞g3 ♞e7**,

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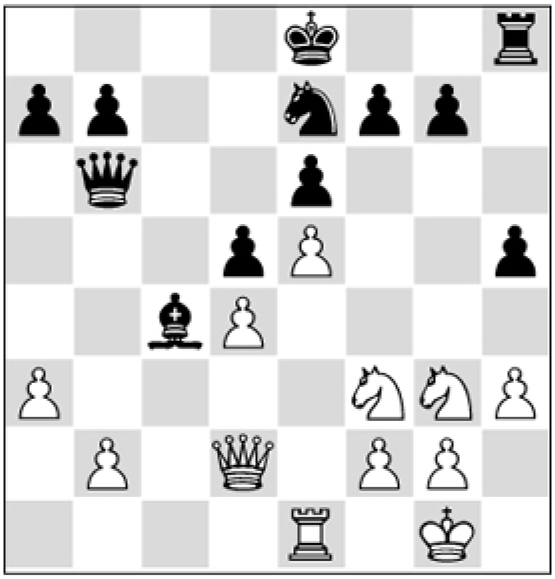

White develops in the sense of a systematic over-protection of d4

when White stands somewhat better (White won on the 61st move; see Appendix Two, *The Blockade*, Game 5).

So much concerning the over-protection of the base. Relevant to our discussion also is the over-protection of the following points:

(a) The central points

On a prior occasion we emphasized that the common neglect of the central theater of war is to be subject to criticism. But here we are concerned with a detail, or more accurately, with the assessment of a quite definite, and, for the hypermodern style of play, typical situation. As is generally known, the hypermodern player has an admirable ability to resist the impulse to occupy the center with pawns, at least until a favorable opportunity presents itself. But when such a chance is afforded him he casts aside all shyness, and the pawns, supported by the fianchettoed bishops, break wildly forth, occupy the center, and seek to crush the opponent. Against this threatened evil, as we have said, the over-protection of certain central squares provides a thoroughly proven counter-resource that we cannot recommend warmly enough.

Let us consider the following opening to the game Réti-Yates, New York 1924: **1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♗d6 5.b3 0-0** Why such a hurry? Stabilizing the center was much more pressing, hence …c7-c6, …♘d7, and …e7-e5. **6.0-0 ♖e8? 7.♗b2 ♘bd7 8.d3? c6 9.♘bd2 e5** The situation as it now stands is unquestionably favorable for Black; White should have played 8.d4. **10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♖c1 ♘f8 12.♖c2 ♗d7 13.♕a1 ♘g6 14.♖fc1** Diagram 485.

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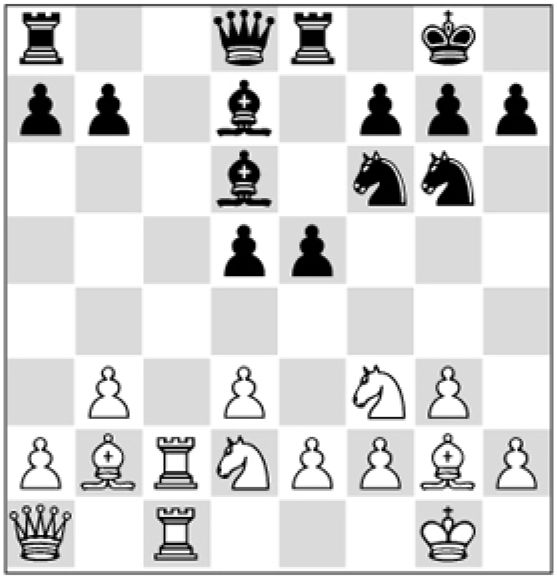


Black to move. Which point is worthy of over-protection?

White’s queen maneuver is distinctive and significant. He intends to undermine the enemy center with d3-d4 when the opportunity arises, and if …e5-e4, then ♘e5. Hence Black has a duty to over-protect e5 ahead of time. The best move here is, first, **14…b5**, aiming at the white queenside that has been compromised by the position of the queen at a1. If then **15.♘f1**, Black plays **15…♕b8!** (over-protecting e5) **16.♘e3 a5**, with the better game for Black.

This line of play, which I pointed out in *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* (1924), met with little sympathy, since the idea of over-protection was as yet wholly unknown to the chess world. Today, matters are different.

On a chess tour in the spring of 1926 I had occasion to play …♕b8, with an intent similar to that in the game above. Inasmuch as this game took a most instructive course, I am unable to withhold it from my amiable readers.

Game 33

Schurig

(with, up to the 12th move, Laue)

Aron Nimzowitsch

simultaneous display, Leipzig 1926

1.♘f3 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 c6 4.b3 ♗d6 5.♗b2 ♘f6 6.d3 ♘bd7 7.♘bd2 ♕c7

Also possible was 7…e5. The text move is the start of an original maneuver. Black plans an attack on the far queenside, but before doing so he wishes to secure his center against the potential threat e2-e4-e5. So first he sees to the over-protection of the central point e5. Moreover, his queen has at her disposal a reserve square at b8 to which she can withdraw if need be, e.g., upon the opening of the c-file.

8.0-0 a5 9.c4 b5

The question whether a flank attack is permissible or not can only be solved by evaluating the situation prevailing in the center. If the center is secure, a flank attack cannot be entirely misguided. So too here. What does it matter that the king has not yet castled? He is unassailable where he is.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♖c1 ♕b8

The queen removes to her private chamber.

12.♕c2

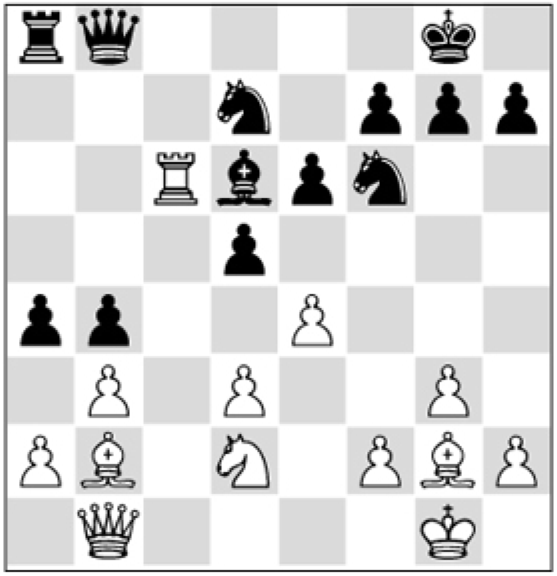
12.e4 would exert more pressure.

12…0-0 13.e4 ♗b7 14.♘d4 ♖c8 15.♕b1 ♖xc1 16.♖xc1 b4 17.♘c6

Trying to realize his advantage too early, in my view.

17…♗xc6 18.♖xc6 a4

486



Every spare moment is used to strengthen his position on the extreme queen’s wing.

19.d4

This move is to be counted as a success for Black’s over-protection strategy! The valuable diagonal b2-f6 is now obstructed; but the e4-e5 advance could not have been achieved in any other way.

So the pieces engaged in over-protection have once again acquitted themselves well and have not had to endure any pressure, rather they have had a noticeable effect in all directions.

One variation worth mentioning is 19.f4, to keep Black’s d-pawn at d3. There could follow 19…♗c5+!, when White is forced to play 20.d4; after 20…♗f8 21.e5 the text position would be reached.

19…♝f8! 20.e5 ♞e8

The white bishops now have little activity.

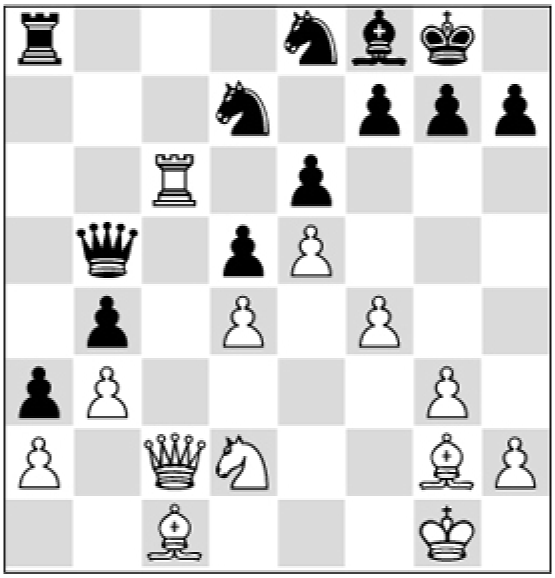
21.f4 ♛b5

21…a3 at once would have been more precise.

22.♛c2 a3 23.♝c1

It was imperative to interpolate the zwischenzug 23.♗f1.

487



Black sacrifices the ‘small exchange’, invades the enemy position, and wins the pawn fixed at a2

23…♝c5

This interesting combination should be prefaced with 23…♘c5 (not 23…♗c5). The difference will soon be clear.

24.♜xc5 ♞xc5 25.dxc5?

The zwischenzug 25.♗f1 (which would not have been possible after 23…♘c5) would have yielded him an additional tempo for the endgame.

25…♜c8

The a2-pawn – can we see it in his face? – is on the verge of death.

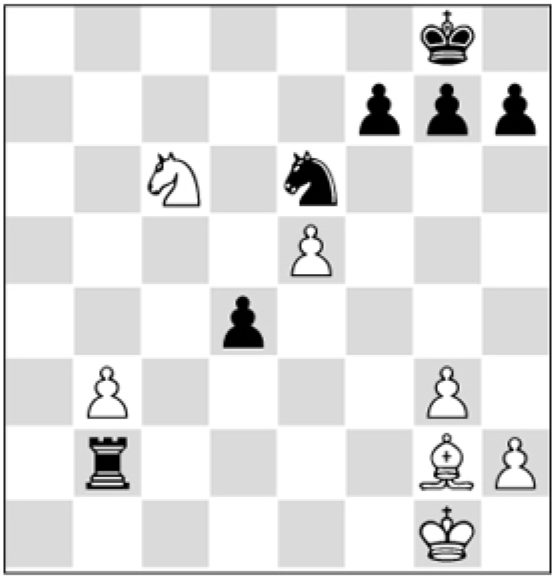
26.♞b1 ♛xc5+ 27.♛xc5 ♜xc5 28.♝xa3

Or 28.♗d2 ♖c2 29.♗f1 ♖xa2 30.♗xb4 ♖g2+! and wins. If White had one tempo more (see the note to White’s 25th move) this variation would not have been possible. There followed

28…bxa3 29.♞xa3 ♜a5 30.♞c2 ♜xa2 31.♞d4 ♜b2 32.f5 ♞c7 33.fxe6 ♞xe6 34.♞c6 d4

0-1

488



(b) Over-protection of the center as a defensive measure for our own kingside

The matter about to be discussed in detail differs from that considered under (a) in its general trend and is therefore treated here as an independent maneuver and not as a subdivision of the previous case.

The discussion of the position in Diagram 360 shows an example of over-protection that is characteristic of the case now to be considered. Also instructive for this purpose is our Game 13. In that encounter, after the 13th move, the following position arose:

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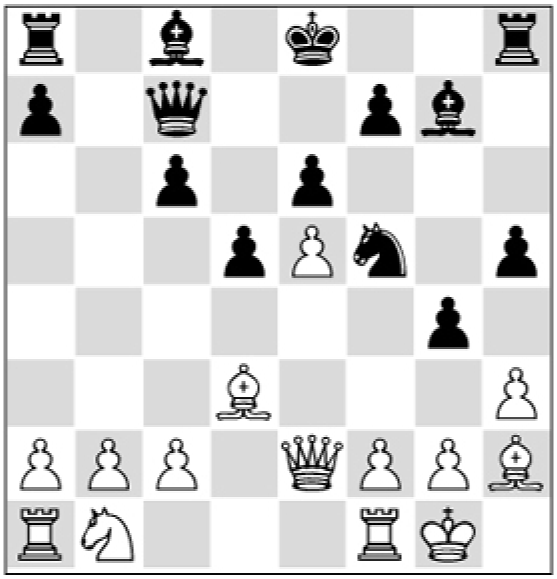
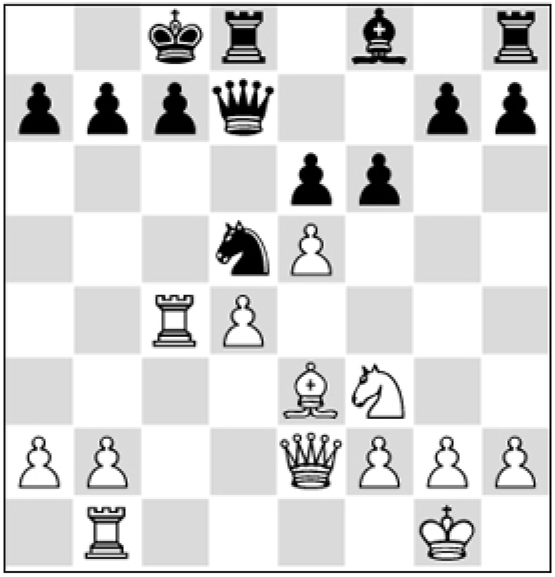


White parries every kingside attack by over-protecting a central point. How?

Black had just played **13…g4!**. On the reply 14.hxg4 hxg4 15.♕xg4 Black intends 15…♖xh2 followed by …♗xe5+ and …♗xb2. But White played **14.♜e1**. In doing something for his center he at the same time strengthened his power of resistance against flank attacks as well. There followed: **14…♚f8 15.♞c3!** The beginning of a blockade maneuver. **15…♛e7 16.♝xf5 exf5 17.♛e3 ♜h6 18.♞e2 c5 19.♞f4** with the superior game for White, for in this position the two bishops have little to say in the face of the strong knight, which cannot be driven away. Also, Black's overall mobility is very slight, for although the pawns at c5 and d5 are mobile to an extent, the rest of his pawns are blockaded.

Of quite special interest to our theme is the maneuver in the following consultation game (Diagram 490).

490



Allies-Nimzowitsch

It’s Black’s move. That the knight on d5 is the pride of his position there can be no doubt. But it is not an easy matter to come up with a plan. White was formulating one, although to be sure it could hardly be called a dangerous initiative, namely ♕d2 followed by ♘e1-d3-c5. The train of thought that I followed in this game got me on the track of a hidden maneuver, which even today I consider a good one. The individual links in this mental sequence are these:

I. The knight on d5 is strong;

II. therefore, the over-protectors, the queen at d7 and the rook are d8, are also strong; but,

III. the rook at d8 is also engaged with its king’s position, which has an influence on its strength in the center;

IV. therefore, the rook belongs on c8!

Accordingly, the play went (see Diagram 490) **14...♚b8! 15.♕d2 ♜c8! 16.♘e1 ♝e7 17.♘d3 ♜hd8**. The goal has been attained! The rook at d8 now feels itself concerned entirely with the center, as the king is being guarded by its colleague on c8. The further destiny of the d8-rook can be found in the detailed report of Game 34 (at the end of this chapter). And the friendly reader should note very particularly how on this occasion the strength of the over-protector as such gave a fine account of itself.

We could identify still more ‘points’ worthy of over-protection, but we will limit ourselves to the few examples given here. But before we devote ourselves to the next strategy, we must once more stress the fact that only strategically important points should be over-protected, not, say, a weak pawn or a kingside resting on a weak foundation. Over-protection must in no sense be regarded as an act of Christian meekness or compassion.

The pieces over-protect a point because by such contact they promise themselves strategic advantages; we should therefore seek to establish connection with strong points.

A weak pawn is only in a single, exceptional case justified in claiming over-protection – that is, when, like a wet nurse, it fosters the growth of a giant. For instance, consider a position with white pawns on d4 and e5, black pawns at e6 and d5. The base of the chain at d4 is very weak, but it is a nurse to the strategically important pawn on e5, so that over-protection of d4 seems altogether appropriate.

With this we bid farewell to the strategy of over-protection.

How to get rid of weak pawns

We are not concerned here with how one gets rid of weak pawns, the discussion here is rather about *which* pawns deserve such unloving treatment.

The situation is always the same: an otherwise sound pawn complex which, however, exhibits a weak component. Depending on the kind of weakness involved, we distinguish two cases:

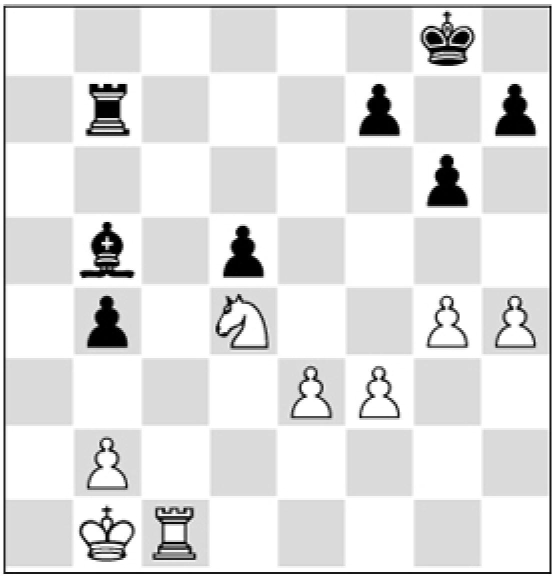
(a) The weakness of the pawn is obvious.

(b) The weakness would appear only after a pawn advance (one’s own or the enemy’s).

We shall give an example of each of these two cases.

(a) **Nimzowitsch-Jacobsen**,
Copenhagen 1923 (Diagram 491).

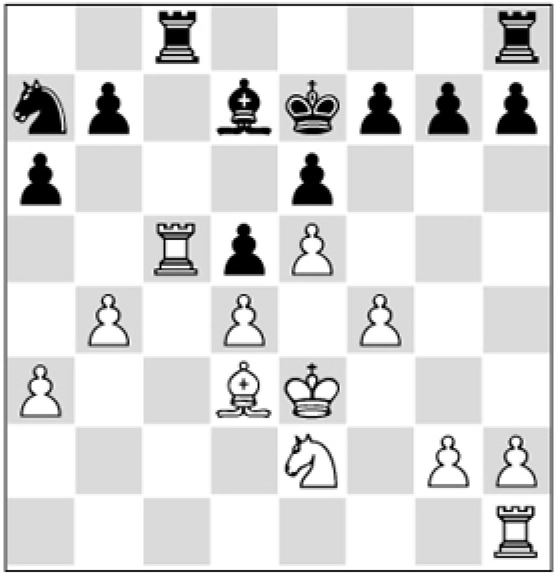
491



36.♜c5 ♝d7 Or 36…♗d3+ 37.♔c1 ♖d7 38.♖c8+ and ♖b8. **37.♜xd5** So White is up a pawn. **37…♚f8 38.♚c2 b3+ 39.♚c3 ♚e7** White is in a position to bring his own flock of pawns (e-, f-and g-) under one roof; for this he need only play e3-e4, for then everything is nicely protected and the shepherd (the rook at d5) can, with a clear conscience, turn his attention to other matters. But no, for the h4-pawn, that silly little sheep, would run away from the shepherd – for at some point Black would threaten the maneuver …♖a8-a1-h1xh4. Hence this dumb sheep must be outcast from the congregation of the righteous! There followed: **40.h5! ♝e6 41.♜c5 ♚d6 42.♜c6+ ♚d7 43.hxg6 hxg6** Done! **44.♞xe6! fxe6 45.♜c5** followed by ♖g5 and f3-f4, with an easily won rook ending.

(b) Here we give an ending from Dr. Tarrasch’s youth: **Tarrasch-Bartmann**, Nuremberg 1883.

492



Here Black played **21…♜c6**, and there followed: **22.♜hc1 ♜hc8 23.g4 g6 24.f5 gxf5 25.gxf5 ♜g8?** At all costs 26.f6+ could not be permitted, hence 25…exf5 was mandatory; e.g., 26.♘f4 ♗e6 27.♖g1, with a hard struggle ahead. **26.f6+ ♚f8 27.♜g1 ♜xg1 28.♞xg1 ♚g8** and Black's h-pawn constitutes a glaring weakness in his game. This evil could have been avoided if on the 21st move (Diagram 492) Black had played 21…h5, with the idea of allowing f5-f6 on the condition that both the g- and h-pawns should disappear in the exchange. The sequel could be 22.h3 g6 (not 22…h4? because of 23.♘g1 and ♘f3), when, after a few more moves, Black would have obtained a more favorable position than in the game.

Whereas case (a) does not make any great demands on the player, the correct handling of the strategic weapon discussed under (b) is exceedingly difficult. It requires above all a pretty thorough knowledge of the various forms under which an advance of a compact pawn mass, especially one on the wing, tends to run its course. But many pages in this book have been devoted to this advance and all its consequences, so we leave the matter to our kindly reader, to his own, we hope, no less kind fate. Only let it be clear to him that the strategic necessity to rid himself of his own troublesome pawn may just as well occur when advancing his own pawns and not only in the case of a pawn advance by the enemy (as was the case in Diagram 492). Just when the mangy sheep is to be cast out – whether *before* the operation (the forward march of a compact pawn mass) or during it – is a matter that can only be decided on a case-by-case basis.

We now offer a game illustrating over-protection, and then we begin a new chapter.

Game 34

Three Swedish Amateurs
Aron Nimzowitsch
Sweden 1921

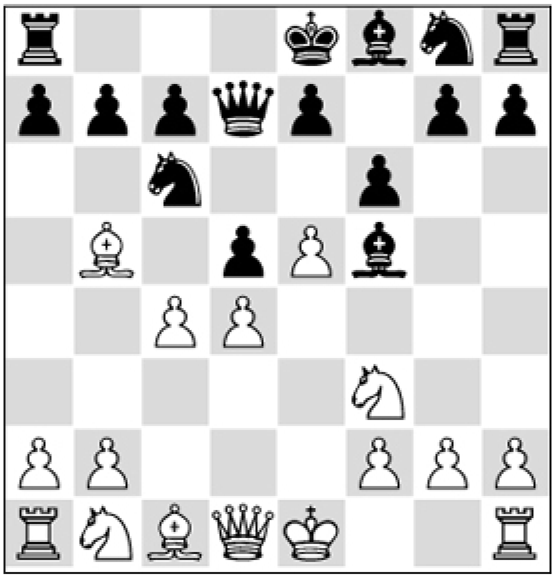
This game illustrates, in addition to over-protection, the problem of the isolated queen’s pawn.

1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 f6 4.♗b5

4.f4 is considered the better move.

4…♗f5 5.♘f3 ♕d7 6.c4

493



6…♗xb1!

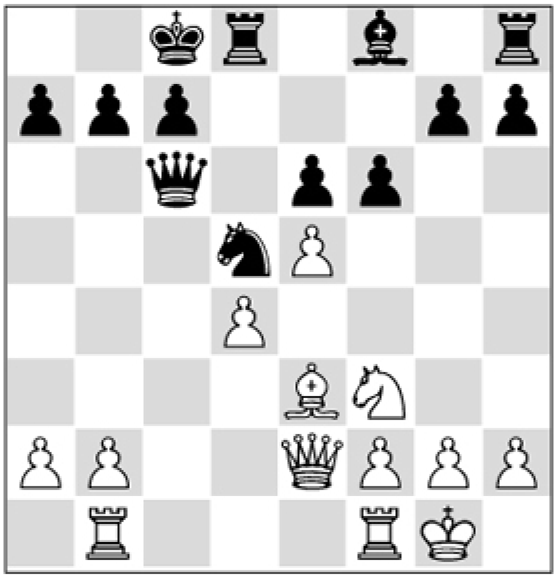
With this far from obvious exchange Black plans to win the d5-square for his knight.

7.♖xb1 0-0-0 8.cxd5

If 8.c5, then 8…g5!, when there would be a fight for the possession of the central point e5. For example, (8.c5 g5) 9.♕e2 (to threaten 9.e6, shutting Black in) 9…♕e6! 10.h3 ♘h6 and …♘f7; or 10…♘b8. In both cases Black would not stand badly.

8…♕xd5 9.♗xc6 ♕xc6 10.0-0 e6 11.♗e3 ♘e7 12.♕e2 ♘d5

494



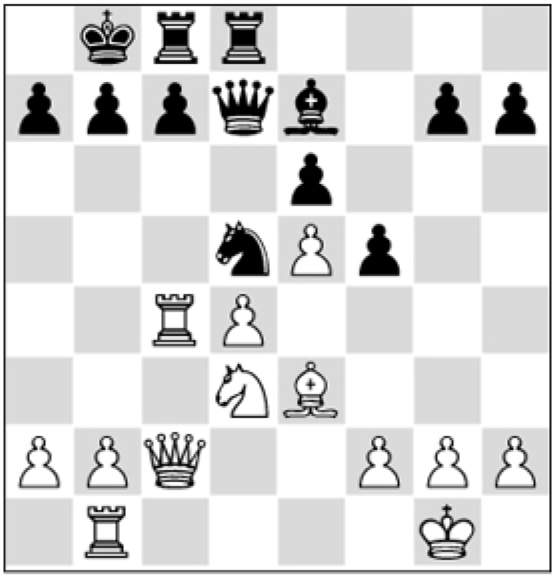
The d4-pawn we can in good conscience regard as an Isolani. Its weakness (for the endgame!) is evident, and the d5-point is quite strong for Black. With respect to any white advantages in compensation for the Isolani, the outpost point c5 is not bad, but e5 is of no use to him, I mean for the knight on f3. The game is approximately level.

13.♖fc1 ♕d7

It is very much a question whether the exchange on f6 might not have been better for White than the rook move. It is true that his opponent would then have obtained the g-file and a centralized bishop on d6, but the e-file was not to be despised – at least as a counterweight. The peculiar over-protection put into effect by Black over moves 13 to 18 we have already discussed in greater detail in our analysis of Diagram 490.

14.♖c4 ♔b8 15.♕d2 ♖c8 16.♘e1 ♗e7 17.♘d3 ♖hd8 18.♕c2 f5

495



After consolidating his position Black now goes over to the attack, which, admittedly, is difficult to carry out, inasmuch as in the first place there are no targets of attack, and secondly, White has some attacking chances of his own.

19.♖c1

19.b4 absolutely had to be played, with the intent (should the opportunity arise) ♘c5 ♗xc5; bxc5. The question now is, is Black’s position strong enough to stand a measure of weakening? To be considered after 19.b4 are mainly 19…b6 and 19…b5. On 19…b6 White can play 20.♘c5!; after 20…♗xc5! 21.bxc5 c6 Black would, however, stand very well. But on no account can he accept the knight sacrifice, as the following combination proves (see Diagram 495): 19.b4! b6 20.♘c5 bxc5 21.bxc5+ ♔a8? (essential was the counter-sacrifice 21…♘b6) 22.c6 ♕e8 23.♖a4 (threatening 24.♖xa7+) 23…♘b6 24.d5!! ♖xd5 25.♖xa7+ ♔xa7 26.♕a4+ ♔b8 27.♗xb6 cxb6 28.♖xb6+ ♔c7 29.♖b7+ ♔d8 30.c7+! ♖xc7 31.♖b8+ ♖c8 32.♖xc8+ followed by ♕xe8+ and wins. A true Morphy combination.

But we calmly note the fact that the over-protected central position is so strong that Black can, without concern, leave himself unprotected and yet remain master of the situation as before, for he is in a position, with a smile, to evade any diabolical combination on the part of his opponent.

In connection with 19.b4 we should also examine the variation that results after Black plays 19…b5. Here, too, Black does not fare badly; e.g., 19.b4 b5 20.♖c6 ♔b7 21.♘c5+ ♗xc5 22.♖xc5 ♘b6 and …c7-c6, when Black is strong on the light squares.

19…g5 20.♞c5 ♝xc5 21.♜xc5 ♜g8 22.♛e2 h5! 23.♝d2

23.♕xh5? g4! and …♖h8.

23…h4 24.a4 g4 25.a5 a6 26.b4 c6

White has at last spent his fury.

27.♜b1 ♛f7 28.♜b3 f4 29.♛e4 f3

For White could not hold out after 30.gxf3 gxf3+ 31.♔f1 ♖cf8 (stronger than 31…♖g1+).

30.♜c1 fxg2 31.♚xg2 ♜cf8

Note the surprising ease with which the black rooks are brought into the game, to my mind further proof of the enormous vitality of the over-protector.

32.♜f1 g3! 33.hxg3 hxg3 34.f4

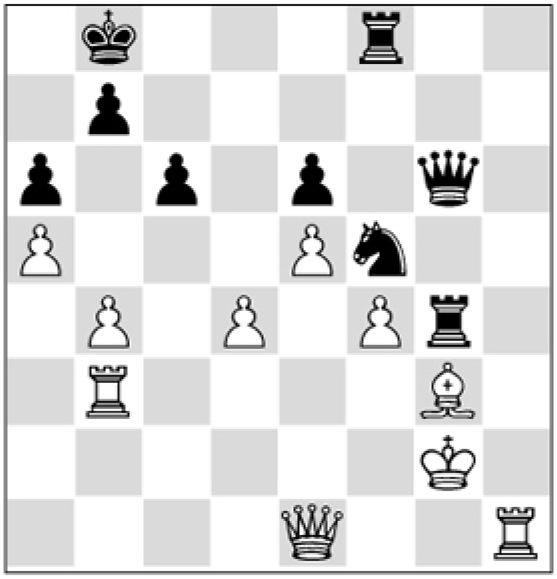
34.♖xg3 would expose the king after 34…♖xg3+.

34…♞e7

Now, on 35.♖xg3, 35…♘f5 36.♖g5 ♖xg5+ and …♘h4+ would follow.

35.♝e1 ♞f5 36.♜h1 ♜g4 37.♝xg3 ♛g6 38.♛e1

496



38…♗xg3!

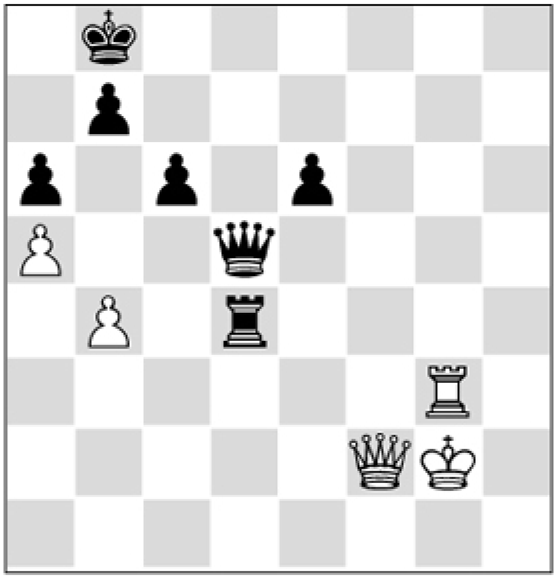
This move is of decisive power, although simple and crude. It wins the pawns that are so conveniently positioned on the 4th rank.

39.♖xg3 ♖fxf4 40.♖h3 ♖xd4 41.♕f2 ♖xg3+ 42.♖xg3 ♕e4+ 43.♔h2 ♕xe5 44.♔g2 ♕d5+

White resigned (see diagram 497).

One of my favorite games.

497



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Chapter 14

Maneuvering

Maneuvering against an enemy weakness. The combined attack on both wings. Is there a certain affinity between these two stratagems?

1. Of which logical components does the stratagem of maneuvering against a weakness (‘tacking’) consist? The concept of the axis, about which the maneuvering operation revolves.

In introducing the following analysis I should like to try to present a scheme for the operation to be discussed. I conceive the course of a maneuvering action to be something like the following: an enemy weakness can be attacked in at least two different ways, but each such attacking attempt would be met with an adequate counter. In order, despite this, to conquer the enemy weakness we make use of our comparatively greater freedom of movement thanks to certain conditions of the terrain, attacking the target in different ways (maneuvering play) and thus compelling the enemy pieces to take up uncomfortable defensive positions. In consequence of this, an obstruction to the defending pieces or something of the sort will intervene and the ‘weakness’ will prove to be untenable.

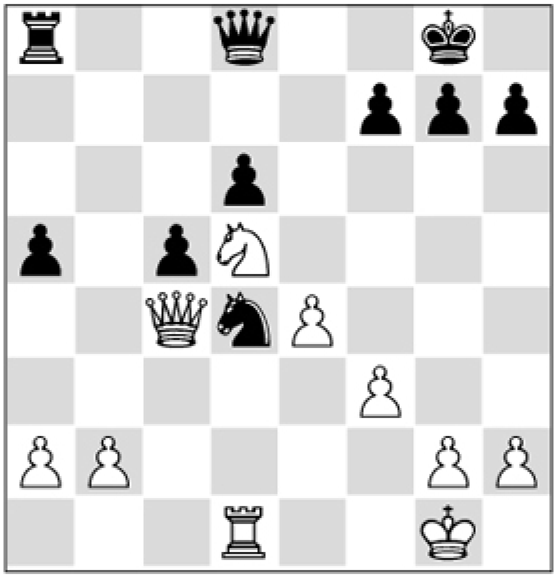
As we can see from this scheme, it would be quite mistaken to denote this type of maneuvering as a pointless moving to and fro. On the contrary, every maneuvering action sets itself a clearly predetermined objective, having in view the conquest of a quite definite weakness. The ways that lead to this conquest are to be sure of a complex nature.

2. The terrain. The law of maneuvering. The change of position.

The terrain over which the maneuvering operation takes place, if we are to succeed, must be strongly built up. The main characteristic of maneuvering is that the different troop movements always pass through a quite definite square (or line of demarcation).

For example, let us consider Diagram 498.

498



We are maneuvering against the pawn on d6, with the d5-point as the ‘axis’ around which the operation revolves

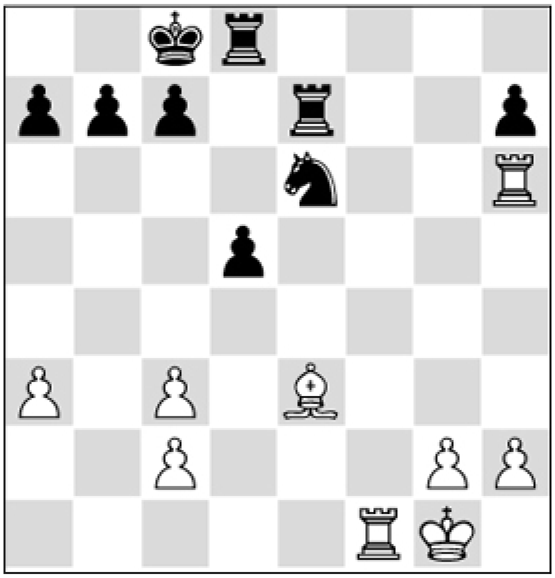
Here it is the point d5 that the white pieces wish to occupy, from there to engage in further maneuvering. The point d5 might accordingly be described as a fortified way station; it is therefore right and proper to designate it as an axis around which the whole maneuvering operation revolves. All maneuvering is in fact carried out under the banner of the fortified point d5. All the pieces, even the rook at d1 (over the obstacle on d4), strive to get to d5. Moreover, the law governing all maneuvering action requires that d5 be occupied by different pieces, each in turn, for this will always create new threats and thus help bother the opponent.

The relationship between the white pieces on the one hand and the axis point d5 on the other corresponds, moreover, to the ‘contact’ we came

to understand in the previous chapter, how such a contact exists between over-protectors and a strategically important point. The fact that in our example the pieces strive for d5 speaks plainly for the strength of that point. Note, too, the maneuver by which the pieces trade places (Diagram 498), namely White’s move sequence ♘e3, ♕d5, and ♘c4. Besides the rotating occupation of the ‘axis point’, this maneuver constitutes an additional valuable weapon, one that comes in quite handy when engaged in this process of tacking.
We now offer some typical instances of maneuvering from familiar games.

(a) A pawn weakness that is shortly to be besieged from the seventh rank, and down a file

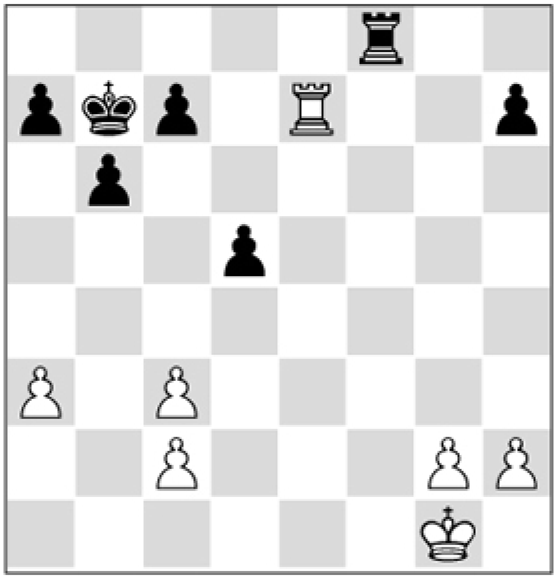
499



Rubinstein-Selesniev
Winter Tournament 1921

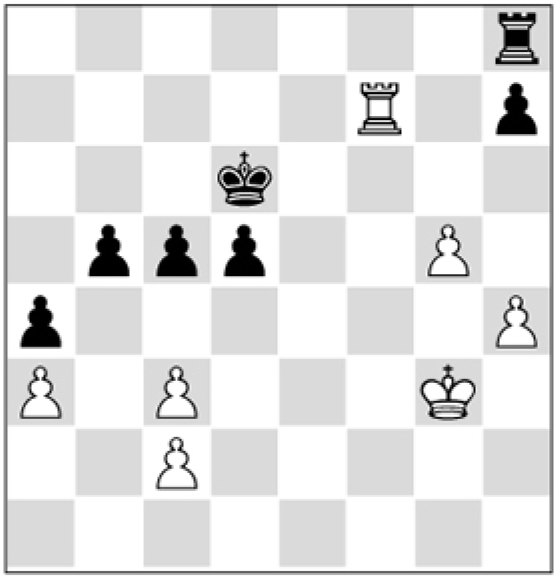
The play went: **21…b6** 21…d4 deserved preference; e.g., 22.cxd4 ♘xd4 23.♗g5 ♘e2+ 24.♔f2! (otherwise 24…♖f7+ follows) 24…♖f8+ 25.♖f6 ♖xf6+ 26.♗xf6 ♖e6. **22.♝f2 ♜f8 23.♜e1 ♜ef7 24.♜hxe6 ♜xf2 25.♜e8+ ♚b7 26.♜xf8 ♜xf8 27.♜e7** (Diagram 500)

500



And now there begins some brilliant maneuvering against the weakness at h7. Black covers the pawn by **27…♖h8**. But now there follows **28.♔f2**. After **28…♔c6 29.g4 ♔d6 30.♖f7 a5 31.g5 a4 32.h4 b5 33.♔g3 c5** (Diagram 501)

501



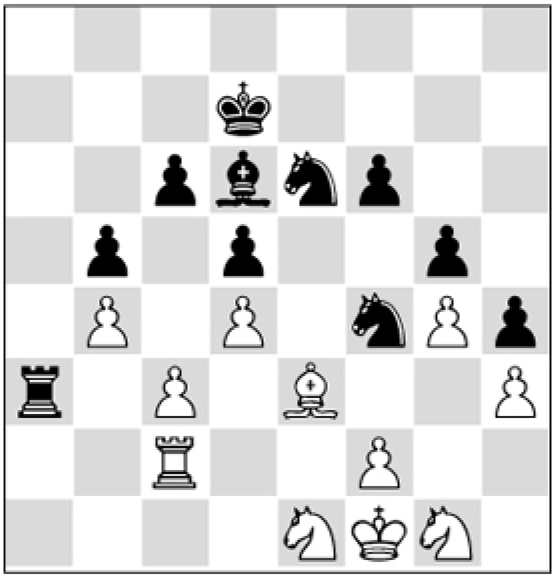
Black is threatening to create a passed pawn by …b5-b4. Rubinstein attacks the weakness at h7 from the other side. **34.♖f6+! ♔c7 35.♖h6 b4 36.cxb4 cxb4 37.axb4 ♖a8 38.♖xh7+** The ‘weakness’ has fallen. **38…♔b6 39.♖f7 a3 40.♖f1 a2 41.♖a1 ♔b5 42.g6 ♔xb4 43.h5** and Black resigned.

The ‘axis’ here is to be seen in the lines from e7 to h7 and from h6 to h8. The avid student should try to determine why the change of front at the 34th move could not have happened earlier.

The next case is much more complex.

(b) Two weak pawns, here c3 and h3

502

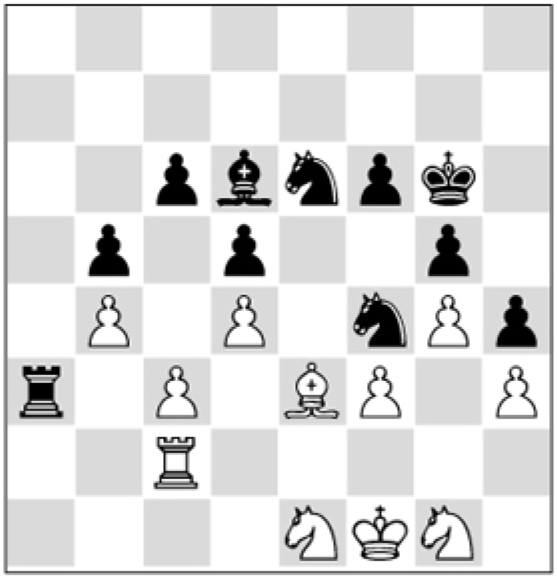


Kalashnikov-Nimzowitsch (1914)

The axis point, about which the action directed against h3 revolves, appears threatened, but it gets rescued, and indeed by a timely massage of the weak pawn on the other side of the house, namely the pawn on c3. So we see here the two separate theaters of war logically connected with one another.

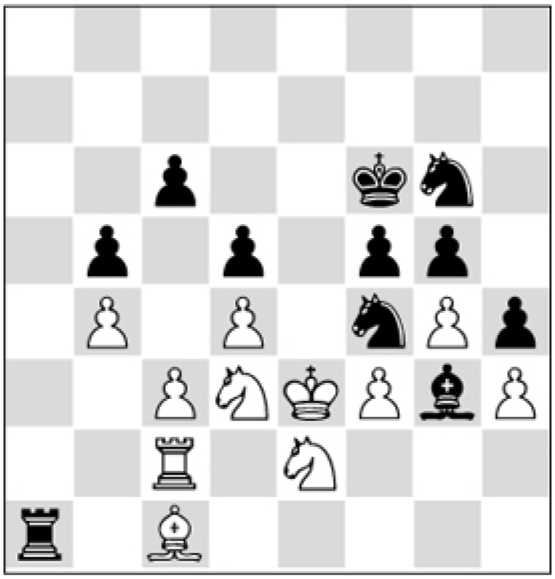
In Kalashnikov-Nimzowitsch (Diagram 502), Black played **36…♚e7**. If White were to do nothing Black would get the advantage by direct attack, that is, by …♚e7-♚f7-g6 followed by the pawn advance …f6-f5. White would then have to defend with f2-f3, which would eventually give his opponent the handle he has been reaching for, namely the posting of his bishop on g3 (after moving the f4-knight out of the way, of course). White’s whole line of defense would then be under threat, and this could not be parried. But White did not stand still; instead he sought to hinder his opponent’s plans with **37.♘g2!**, heading for the exchange 38.♗xf4. If then 38…♘xf4, White has 39.♘xf4 ♗xf4, which would lead to a clear draw. The threatened f4-point could not now be maintained but for the opportunity to maneuver on the other side. So Black played **37…♖a1+ 38.♖c1 ♖a2! 39.♘e1!**. The relief action undertaken by Black on his 37th and 38th moves has proven effective, for now with the rook on a2 White's intended alleviation of his position through exchanges would only lead to an inferior game; e.g., 39.♗xf4? ♗xf4! 40.♖d1 ♗d2 41.♘e2 ♘f4!. After the further 42.♘gxf4 gxf4 43.♔g2 ♖c2 the second player works up a remarkable appetite. **39…♔f7** So Black has won a tempo! But now the same line of play repeats itself! **40.♖c2 ♖a3! 41.♘g2 ♖a1+ 42.♖c1 ♖a2! 43.♘e1 ♔g6 44.♖c2 ♖a3 45. f3** (Diagram 503)

503



This weakening move could not have been avoided forever, otherwise …f6-f5 would be played, and if gxf5, then …♔xf5 and …g5-g4 with a passed h-pawn. **45…f5** Achieved! The conclusion proceeded without a hitch. **46.♔f2 ♔f6** To make room for the knight. **47.♗c1 ♖a1 48.♔e3 ♘g6 49.♘d3 ♗g3** Cf. the note to the 36th move. **50.♘e2 ♘ef4** Diagram 504.

504

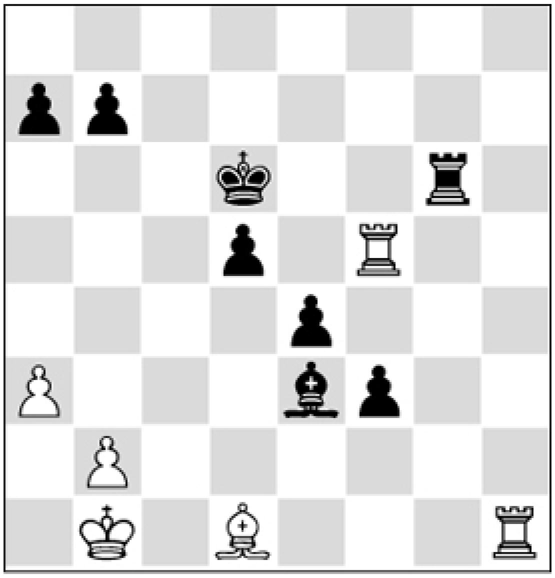


51.♘g1 ♞xd3 52.♔xd3 ♝f4! 53.♘e2 ♝xc1 54.♘xc1 ♞f4+ 55.♔e3 ♞xh3 After a heroic defense the fortress (the h3-pawn) falls. There followed **56.♘e2 f4+** and White resigned, since …♖f1 wins another pawn.

(c) The king as ‘weakness’

In the case of terrain there are two possibilities of a driving action and one axis – a line of demarcation.
See Diagram 505.

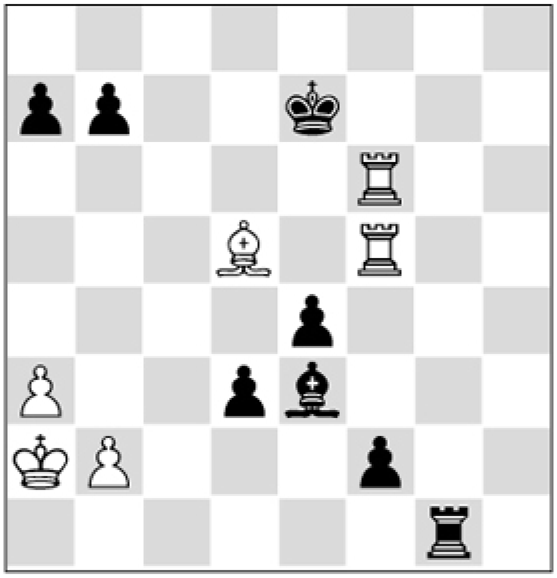
505



Nimzowitsch-Kalinsky, 1914

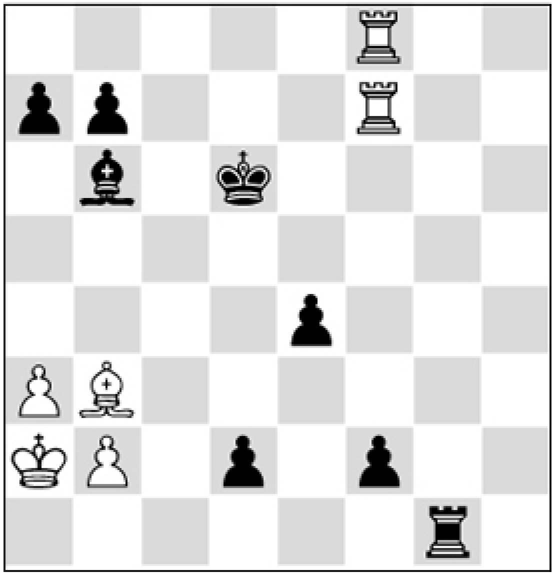
In this piquant position there occurred first **1.♝b3**. On 1.♗c2 f2 2.♖d1, 2…♔e6 would come and White cannot win. **1…d4 2.♝d5 ♜g4** Not at once 2…f2 because of 3.♗xe4, etc. **3.♜hh5 f2** and now White doubled his rooks on the f-file with gain of tempo. **4.♜f6+ ♚e7 5.♜hf5 ♜g1+ 6.♚a2 d3** The position now arrived at (Diagram 506) we shall use as a touchstone for the correctness of our thesis.

506



We explained at the time that a maneuvering action is only possible when the conditions for it are fulfilled. These are: (a) the presence of an axis; (b) diverse threatening play directed against the weakness. The test turns out to be in favor of our point of view. Although the weakness on this occasion is an ideal one – there is no concrete pawn weakness – the configuration (favoring a maneuvering action) is identical with those we have held up as typical. Here, too, the many different threats leave nothing to be desired, for by their use White threatens not only to force the enemy king to the edge of the board, but also, if the opportunity arises, to organize a nice king hunt in the middle of the board. Nor is the (justifiably well-favored) ‘diversity’ lacking an axis for maneuvering here, as the f-file clearly functions as such – a ‘demarcation line’ that the black king cannot step over. Seen in this way, the following movements back and forth become comprehensible – indeed, they take on a degree of panache and color. After 6…d3 play proceeded **7.♜e6+ ♚d7 8.♜f7+ ♚d8 9.♜ef6 d2** The edge-position of the king cannot as yet be taken advantage of, for 10.♖h7 fails to 10…f1♕ and 10 ♖h6 obviously doesn’t work; so he maneuvers further. **10.♜f8+ ♚e7 11.♜6f7+ ♚d6 12.♝b3 ♝b6?** Perhaps 12…a6, making an escape square for the king, was preferable.

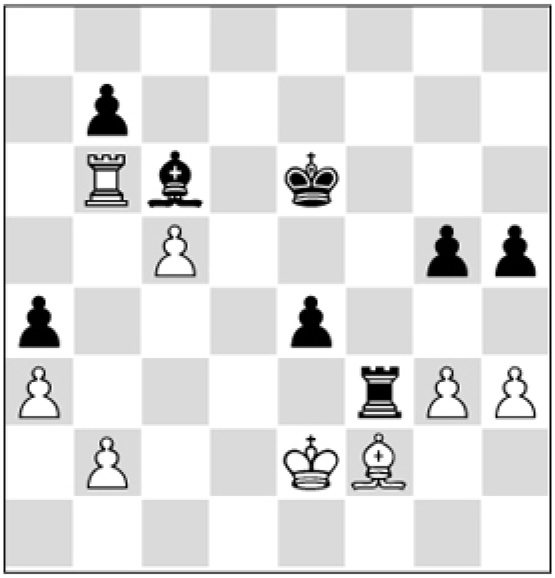
507



13.♜f6+!! Now the king is presented with the choice of either returning to the edge of the board, where his position would now be untenable, or running out into the open where a fate of a different sort would befall him. There followed **13…♚e5** If 13…♔e7, then 14.♖8f7+ ♔d8 15.♖h6 and wins. **14.♜e6+! ♚d4 15.♜xf2! d1♛ 16.♝xd1 ♜xd1 17.♜e2!**, winning the pawn and the game.

3. Combined play on both wings, with weaknesses that for the moment are absent or as yet latent

508



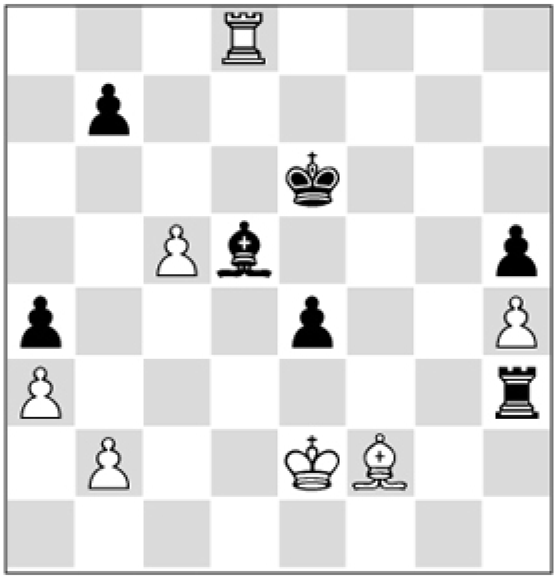
Von Gottschall-Nimzowitsch, Hannover 1908
A combined attack on both wings. White’s weaknesses are the c5-pawn and, as becomes clear later, the h3-pawn

A logical analysis yields these findings: the c5-pawn, in view of the prevailing insecurity of the bishop at f2, has to be viewed as a pronounced pawn weakness. On the other hand, I cannot agree under any circumstances whatever when the pawn mass at g3 and h3 is spoken of as a ‘weakness’, because here, on the kingside, ‘terrain’ is lacking. What followed now was a dissection of the content of the maneuver.

Black (Nimzowitsch) chose the following maneuver, which at first glance looks quite incomprehensible. **39…♚e5 40.♜b4 ♚d5**. The reason for this combination, which sacrifices a tempo, lies in the following: after these moves a zugzwang position has been reached, for if the rook returns to b6 (there are no other plausible moves, for

41.♖d4+ would fail to 41…♔xc5 42.♖xa4+? ♖xf2+, and 41.h4, as we shall soon see, would create the ‘terrain’ that has been so painfully missed) there would follow, after the breakthrough 41…h4 42.gxh4 gxh4 43.♗xh4, the zwischenzug 43…♔xc5, with an attack on the rook. In the game, White (Von Gottschall) decided after all on **41.h4**. There followed **41…gxh4 42.gxh4 ♜h3! 43.♖d4+ ♚e6 44.♖d8 ♝d5** (Diagram 509),

509



and now Black began systematic maneuvering against h4 using g4 as his axis point, and in fact succeeding in penetrating into his opponent’s position by way of this point.

The meaning of the stratagem used here is illuminated by the following schema, which is applicable in all analogous cases:

We maneuvered first against the enemy weakness (here, c5). By means of zugzwang we succeeded (by means of a small mixture of threats) in inducing our opponent to make a ‘troop deployment’ (h3-h4). But, as is the nature of things, this only led to a glaring weakness that was still latent before h3-h4 and which could now easily be attacked.

To recapitulate, play on both wings is usually based on the following schema:

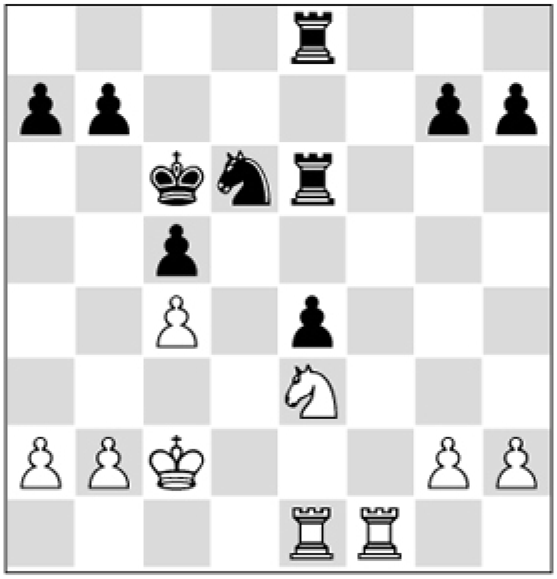
We conduct the struggle on one wing – on the obvious weaknesses in it – thereby drawing the other enemy wing out of its reserve.

Fresh weaknesses are then created in this other wing, after which the signal is given for systematic maneuvering against the two weaknesses (as in the game Kalashnikov-Nimzowitsch given above).

This is the rule. As an (interesting) exception to the rule I should like to underscore the case where we may act as though the exposure of the weakness on the other wing had already taken place.

The game below is an example of such an exposure.
In the position in Diagram 510 (**Von Holzhausen-Nimzowitsch**, Hannover 1926)

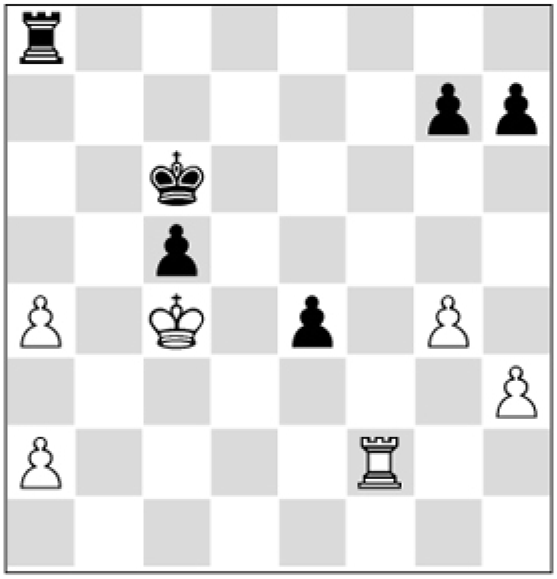
510



Black hastened to bring about the exposure and played **32…♖h6**. The real struggle was to be shifted to the queenside with …b7-b5, true enough, but I was aware that after I succeeded in opening up the game (with …b7-b5) the advanced position of White’s kingside pawns could only serve my purposes. There followed: **33.h3 ♖g6 34.♖e2 a6 35.♖f4 b5 36.b3 ♖g5 37.g4 ♖ge5 38.♔c3 a5!** The weakness at h3 combined with the possible chance of ‘unblocking’ the e4-pawn require that Black peremptorily seek out additional terrain and the axis of maneuver corresponding to it. With his last move Black was fighting for these. **39.♖ef2 a4** Now Black threatens 40…axb3 followed by …bxc4, to be able to invade with the rooks along the a- and b-files.

40.bxa4 bxc4! 41.♖f8 ♖5e7 42.♖xe8 ♖xe8 43.♘xc4 ♘xc4 44.♔xc4 ♖a8!

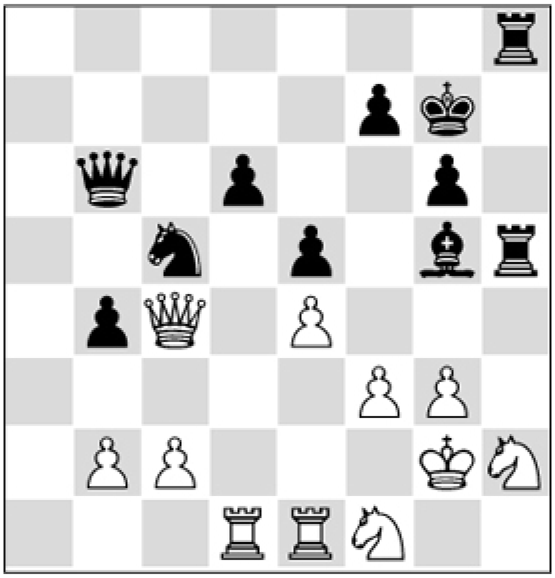
511



The necessary terrain has now been conquered; it consists of the a-, b-, and d-files. I would like to designate d4 as the axis. **45.♖f7** Or 45.♔b3? ♔d5!. **45…♖xa4+ 46.♔b3** Somewhat better was 46.♔c3. **46…♖b4+! 47.♔c3 ♖b7 48.♖f5 ♖a7 49.♔c4 ♖a4+ 50.♔b3 ♖d4** The axis point! **51.♖e5 ♔d6 52.♖e8 ♖d3+ 53.♔c4 ♖xh3** The proper use of the terrain has not failed to bear fruit: the weakness has fallen. **54.♖xe4 ♖a3 55.♖e2 ♖a4+ 56.♔b5 ♖xg4 57.a4 ♖b4+** and Black won on the 71st move.

In Diagram 512, an elegant mating threat is used merely as an instrument to carry out (with gain of tempo) a weakening maneuver against the enemy queenside.

512



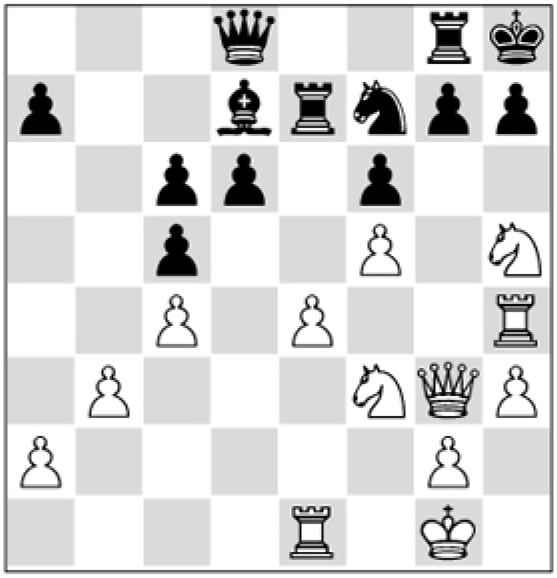
Teichmann-Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1911

31…♞e6 Threatening 32…♖xh2+ 33.♘xh2 ♖xh2+ 34.♔xh2 ♕f2+ 35.♔h3 ♗f4! and wins. **32.♜e2** Parrying the threat, but now there follows (with gain of tempo) **32…♞d4**. White chose **33.♜ee1** If 33.♖f2, then 33…♗e3!. **33…♛b7!** 34…♖c8 can no longer be warded off except by a sacrifice. **34.♜xd4** Or 34.c3? bxc3 35.bxc3 ♕b2+ and wins. **34…exd4** and Black won after a hard struggle (see Game 35 at the end of this chapter).

4. Maneuvering in difficult circumstances (one’s own center is in need of support)

Finally, we present a game carried out in the true spirit of maneuvering.

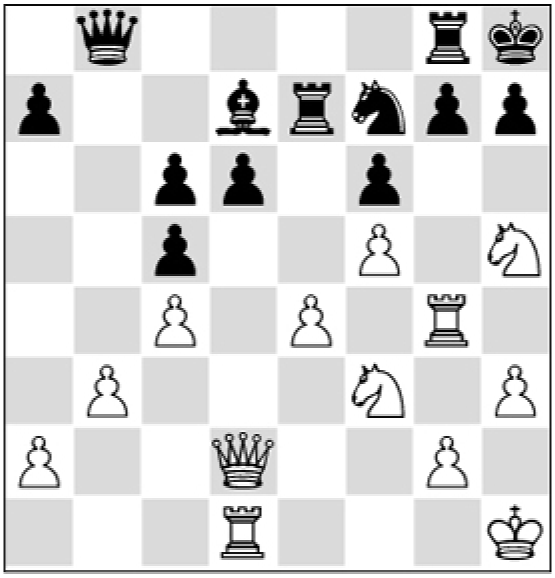
513



Lasker-Salwe
St. Petersburg 1909

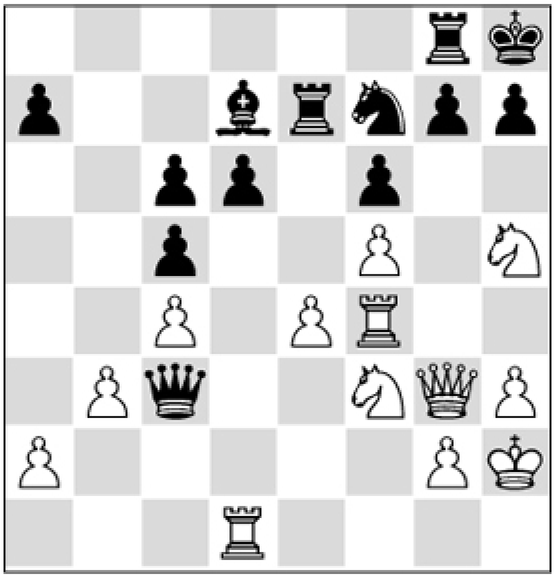
Black’s cramped king position constitutes a glaring weakness, and the d6-pawn must also be regarded as such. But the weakness on e4 imposes a measure of reserve on the first player. The terrain bearing on the weakness at d6, to start with, has little elasticity. The d6-pawn can only be attacked from d1 and from the diagonal. Somewhat more multifarious are the chances of an advance on the kingside, for the rook and queen can at any moment change places with one another on the g- and h-files. To make these not exactly impressive possibilities the basis of an effective operation requires the highest mastery. Lasker (vs. Salwe) demonstrated it as follows: **27…♕e8 28.♕f2!** On 28.♘f4 the counter 28…♘h6 is possible. **28…♖f8 29.♕d2** Fixing the d6-pawn and rendering impossible the counter just mentioned. **29…♕b8 30.♔h1 ♖fe8 31.♖g4! ♖g8** If 31…♘h6, then 32.♘xf6! with advantage to White. **32.♖d1!** Now the pressure on the e4-pawn has been relieved. Diagram 514.

514



32…♕b4? After this the queen eventually finds herself out of play. 32…♕e8 was decidedly preferable. But at this moment it was hard to foresee that the radius of influence of the queen penetrating the enemy position via b4 would be so convincingly localized. **33.♕f2! ♕c3 34.♕h4** Now this old set-up, taken up again, exerts a stronger effect than ever. **34…♘h6 35.♖f4 ♘f7 36.♔h2 ♖ge8 37.♕g3 ♖g8**

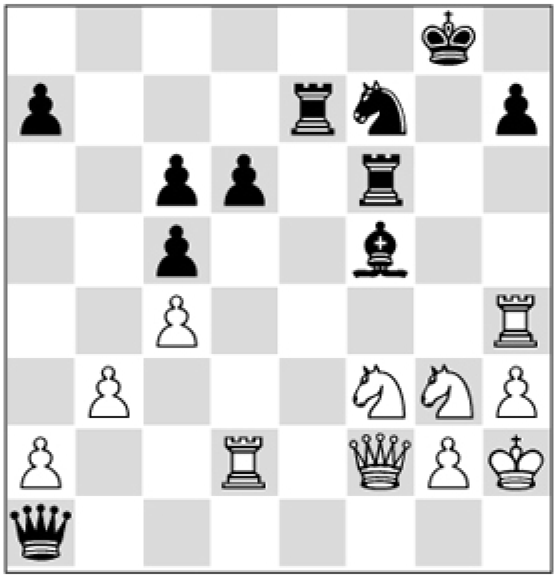
515



38.♖h4 In his book on the tournament Lasker makes the following observation here: ‘If 38.♖g4 ♘h6 39.♖h4, there can follow 39…d5 40.cxd5 cxd5 41.♖xd5 ♗c6. After the text move, the maneuver 38…

d5 fails to 39.cxd5 cxd5 40.♘f4.' Hence the attack on e4 is still in the air. Note the preventive effect of White's maneuver. **38…g5** White threatened 39.♘f4 ♘h6 40.♖xd6. **39.fxg6 ♜xg6 40.♛f2 f5** To get rid of the weakness at f6. **41.♞f4 ♜f6 42.♞e2 ♛b2 43.♜d2 ♛a1 44.♞g3 ♚g8** White threatened 45.exf5 ♗xf5 46.♘xf5 ♖xf5 47.♖xh7+. **45.exf5 ♝xf5** Diagram 516.

516



46.♞d4 cxd4 47.♞xf5 ♚f8 48.♛xd4 ♛xd4 49.♞xd4 ♞e5 50.♜h5 ♜ef7 51.c5 dxc5 52.♜xe5 cxd4 53.♜xd4 ♜f2 54.♜d8+ ♚g7 55.♜a5 and White won.

Lasker's conduct of this game is impressive. How he manages, in spite of the limited threats at his disposal, to dominate the whole board and almost entirely to eliminate his own weakness, is worthy of all admiration. The eager student may learn from this that the variety of diverse objects of attack (enemy weaknesses) can compensate to a certain extent for a relative paucity of threatening lines of play.

We now offer some complete games and game conclusions.

Game 35

Richard Teichmann
Aron Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1911
Hanham Defense

This game illustrates the combined play on both wings. Noteworthy too is the fearlessness by which Black is able up to a certain point to ignore his own ‘weakness’ at d6.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7 5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♕e2 c6 8.♗g5

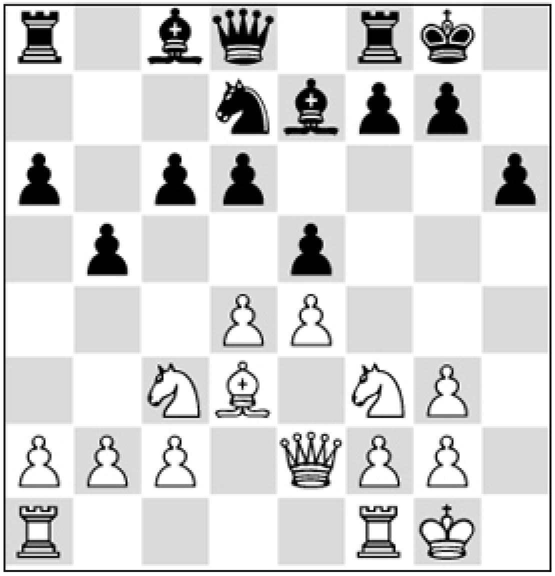
Here 8.a4 deserves preference.

8…h6 9.♗h4 ♘h5 10.♗g3 ♘xg3

10…♗f6 also could have been considered.

11.hxg3 b5 12.♗d3 a6!

517



Black’s pawn mass is now of such a complexion (I mean, in its internal structure) that it must inspire respect. Note the two-fold possibility of development in …c6-c5 or, possibly, …d6-d5.

13.a4

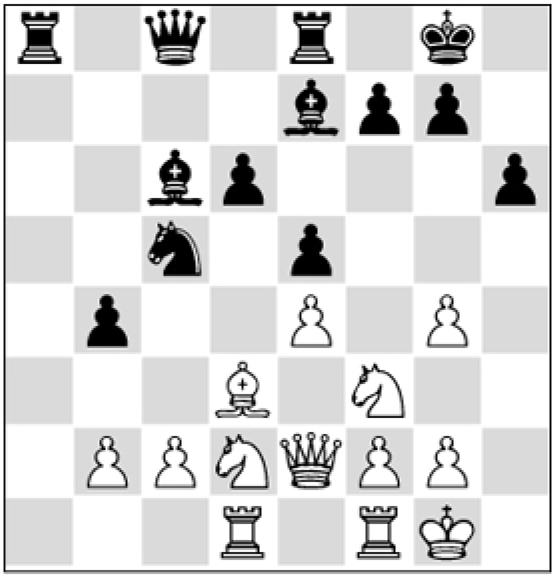
He tries to nip the latent strength of the pawns in the bud.

13…♗b7! 14.♖ad1 ♕c7 15.axb5 axb5 16.g4 ♖fe8! 17.d5

To get out of the way of his vis-à-vis.

17…b4 18.dxc6 ♗xc6 19.♘b1 ♘c5 20.♘bd2 ♕c8

518



White’s attempt to sit venia verbo pick a quarrel must be regarded as having failed; d6 is easy to protect and the two bishops now work in combination with the a-file and the threatening diagonal c8-g4 to exert a not inconsiderable effect.

21.♗c4

A clever defense of the g4-pawn: 21…♕xg4? 22.♗xf7+.

21…g6 22.g3 ♚g7 23.♘h2 ♝g5!

The weakness on d6 is of little significance here.

24.f3

24.f4? exf4 25.gxf4 ♗f6, winning a pawn.

24…♛c7

Threatening 25…♘a4, and if 26.♖b1, then 26…♗xd2 and …♗xe4.

25.♖fe1 ♜h8 26.♘df1 h5

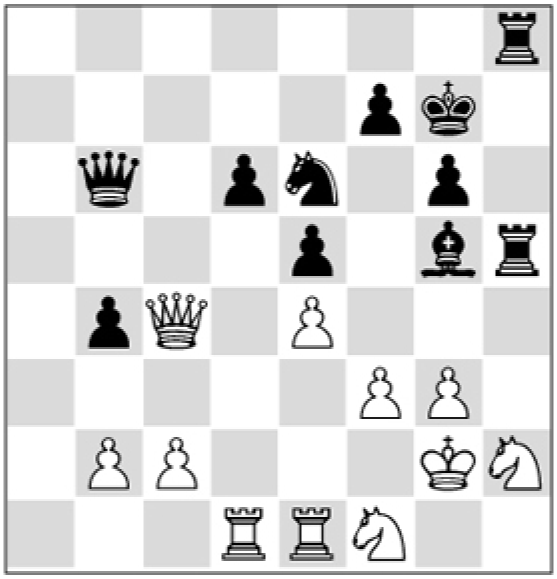
The moves that now follow result in the occupation of the important files and diagonals.

27.gxh5 ♜xh5 28.♗d5 ♜ah8 29.♗xc6 ♛xc6 30.♕c4 ♛b6 31.♔g2

A weakness has gradually crystallized out, namely that of the white base. With the black knight on d4 a successful invasion of White’s 2nd rank would be decisive.

31…♘e6

519



Peering at the d4-square, but at the same time also threatening the kingside by 32…♖xh2+ 33.♘xh2 ♖xh2+ 34.♔xh2 ♕f2+ 35.♔h3 ♗f4!; see Diagram 512.

32.♜e2!

Without the presence of the threat just indicated White could perhaps put together an adequate defense with 32.♖d5 ♘d4 33.f4.

32…♞d4!

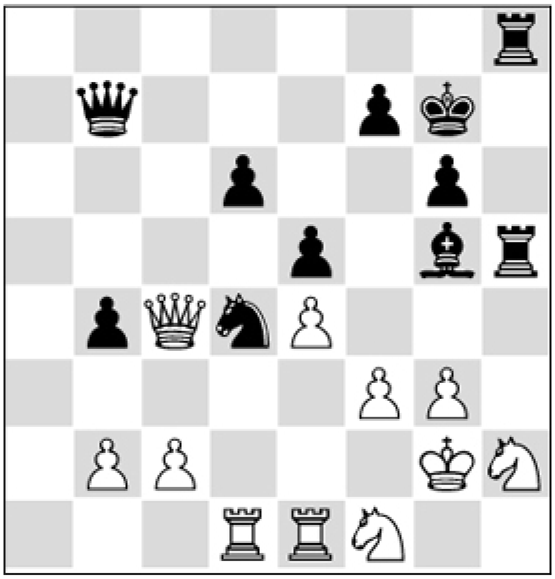
But now this move is played with gain of tempo.

33.♜ee1

Or 33.♖f2? ♗e3!.

33…♛b7!

520



34…♖c8 can no longer be parried. This is a good example of how one can devote himself to several weaknesses at the same time.

34.♜xd4

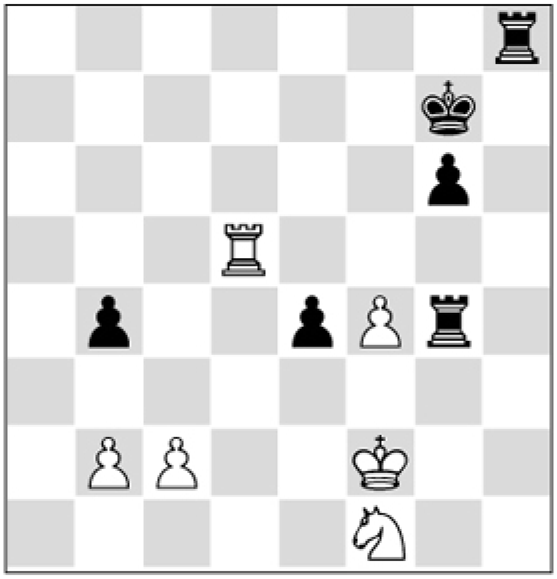
After 34.c3 bxc3 35.bxc3 ♕b2+ the weakness of White’s 2nd rank would be manifest.

34…exd4 35.♞g4

Or, alternatively, 35.♕xd4+ ♗f6 36.♕xd6 ♖d8.

34…♛b6 36.f4 ♝e7 37.♜d1 f5 38.♞f2 fxe4 39.♛xd4+ ♛xd4 40.♜xd4 d5 41.g4 ♝c5 42.♜d1 ♜h4 43.♜xd5 ♝xf2 44.♚xf2 ♜xg4

521



To maintain his advantage Black always had to try to combine his kingside attack with central play (…d6-d5 and …♗c5).

45.♔e3 ♖c8

And now it’s the turn of the queen’s wing…

46.♔xe4 ♖c4+ 47.♔d3 ♖cxf4

Now things are easier.

48.♘e3 ♖g3 49.♖e5 ♔f6 50.♖e8 ♔f7 51.♖e5 ♖f6 52.c4 b3 53.♔d4 ♖e6 54.♖xe6 ♔xe6 55.♘d5 g5

White resigned.

This game was circulated around Denmark with the description ‘Classic Hanham Game’.

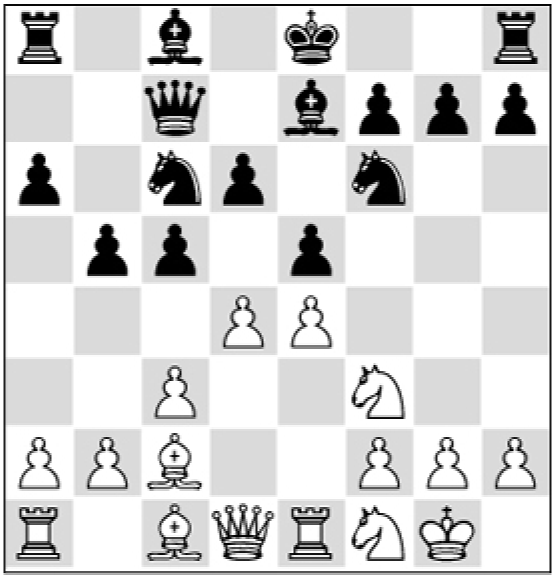
Now we come to a most complicated game in the strategic sense. Lasker maneuvers on one wing and breaks through on the other. Why and how? The reader will find the answers in the notes.

Game 36

Emanuel Lasker
Amos Burn
St. Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 ♘a5 9.♗c2 c5 10.d4 ♕c7 11.♘bd2 ♘c6 12.♘f1

522



12…0-0?

Black should try to force his opponent into a clarification of the center, hence 12…cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗g4.

13.♞e3

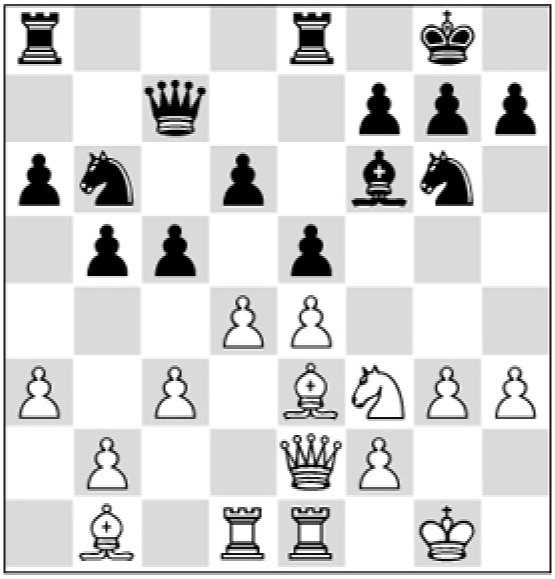
To invade the center with ♘d5.

13…♝g4 14.♞xg4!

On 14.♘d5, 14…♕a7 would follow, with an attack; e.g., 15.♘xe7+ ♘xe7!. With the text move Lasker plays for the advantage of the two bishops.

14…♞xg4 15.h3 ♞f6 16.♝e3 ♞d7 17.♛e2 ♝f6 18.♜ad1 ♞e7 19.♝b1 ♞b6 20.a3 ♞g6 21.g3 ♜fe8

523



Black has played with consistent purpose, his plan being to prepare …d6-d5. So Lasker sees himself compelled to play d4-d5, thereby blocking his own bishops. The game enters a new phase.

22.d5 ♞d7 23.♚g2 ♛d8

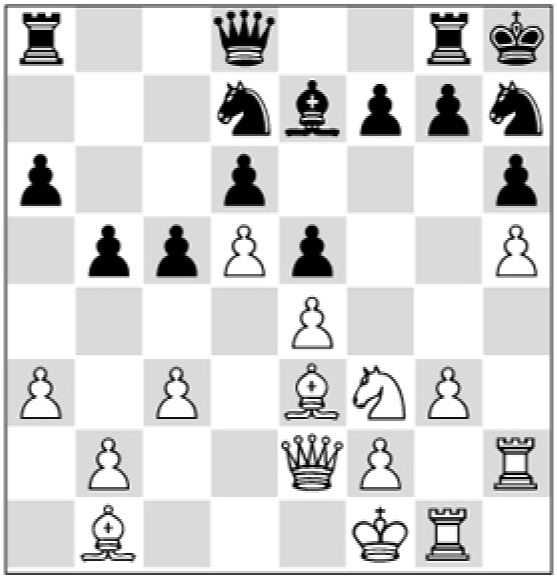
Instead of this he should have fashioned a preventive action for his rook (White is preparing, among others, f2-f4), therefore 23…c4 followed by …♘c5 – plus, the knight would have been well posted.

24.h4 ♝e7 25.h5 ♞gf8 26.♜h1 h6 27.♜dg1 ♞h7

The point g5 now seems strongly fortified.

28.♚f1 ♚h8 29.♜h2 ♜g8

524



30.♘e1

On 30.♘h4 Black would simply exchange (30…♗xh4 31.♖xh4), when the position would take on a rather inflexible character. So Lasker wisely avoids ♘h4 and seeks to preserve what dynamics there are in the position, however slight they may be.

30…♖b8 31.♘c2 a5 32.♗d2 ♗f6 33.f3 ♘b6 34.♖f2

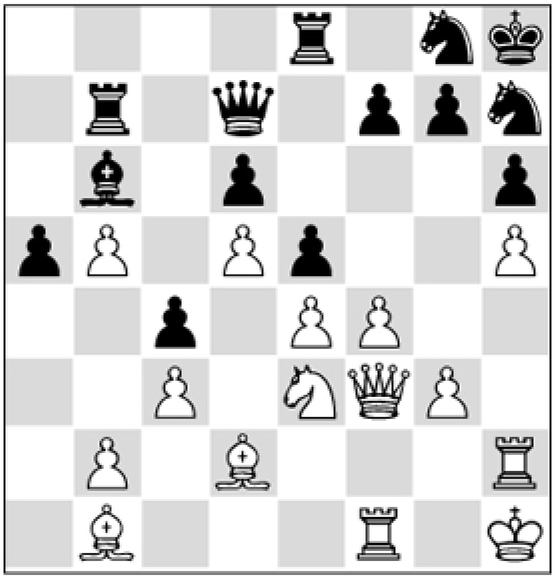
‘White might at some point choose to play ♘e3, and holds in readiness the move f3-f4 in response to …♗g5.’ (Lasker)

34…♘c8 35.♚g2 ♕d7 36.♚h1 ♘e7 37.♖h2 ♖b7 38.♖f1 ♖e8 39.♘e3 ♘g8 40.f4 ♗d8 41.♕f3

Lasker has succeeded in forcing through f3-f4 under circumstances favorable to himself, but he has not achieved any direct advantage from it. And yet, the black pieces, which have to stand guard against the threat of invasion by ♘f5, are less favorably placed in the event of a breakthrough on the queen’s wing. So we say, Lasker has besieged the kingside in order to bring the enemy pieces out of contact with their own queenside. Now he intends to roll up this (left) wing with c3-c4 and so gain a double advantage. Glaring weaknesses are to be created, and moreover his bishops are to get room to maneuver, for instance, 42.c4 b4 43.♗c2 followed by ♕d1 and ♗a4.

41…c4 42.a4 ♗b6 43.axb5

525



43…♕xb5

The decisive mistake.

Correct, as given by Lasker in the tournament book, is the exchange on e3: 43…♗xe3 44.♗xe3 ♕xb5, to be followed by …a5-a4 and …♖a8, when Black can hold.

44.♘f5 ♕d7 45.♕g4 f6

The knight at f5 can no longer be driven away (by …♘e7, say). Black now has obvious weaknesses on both wings; Lasker appropriates and makes use of them without any particular difficulty.

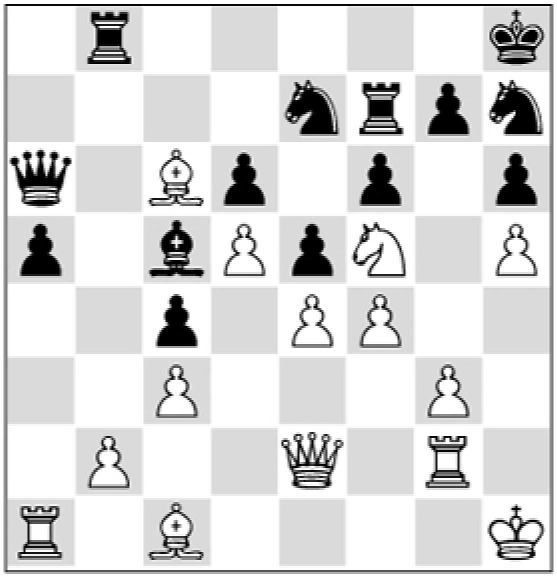
46.♗c2 ♗c5 47.♖a1 ♖eb8 48.♗c1 ♕c7 49.♗a4 ♕b6 50.♖g2 ♖f7 51.♕e2 ♕a6 52.♗c6

Threatening 53.b4.

52…♘e7

At last he is able to oust the intruder at f5, but in the meantime White has become too strong on the queenside.

526



53.♘xe7 ♖xe7 54.♖a4 exf4

Desperation. There followed

55.gxf4 f5 56.e5 ♘f6 57.♖xc4 ♘g4 58.♖xc5 ♕xe2 59.♖xe2 dxc5 60.d6 ♖a7 61.e6 ♖a6 62.e7 ♘f6 63.d7 ♘xd7 64.♗xd7

and Black resigned.

This valuable game is significant in demonstrating, *inter alia*, the striving by the united bishops to get into unblocked terrain.

Game 37

Andersson, Enström, and Öberg
Aron Nimzowitsch
Uppsala 1921

One of three consultation games played simultaneously, illustrating in instructive fashion the connection between central play and diversionary attacks undertaken on the wings. The flank attack’s dependence on the ‘state of health’ of the center is vividly seen here.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3

Correct is 3.e5.

3…♗b4 4.♗d3 ♘c6

A new line of thought.

5.♘e2 ♘ge7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e5

This looks very good.

7...♘f5! 8.♗e3 f6

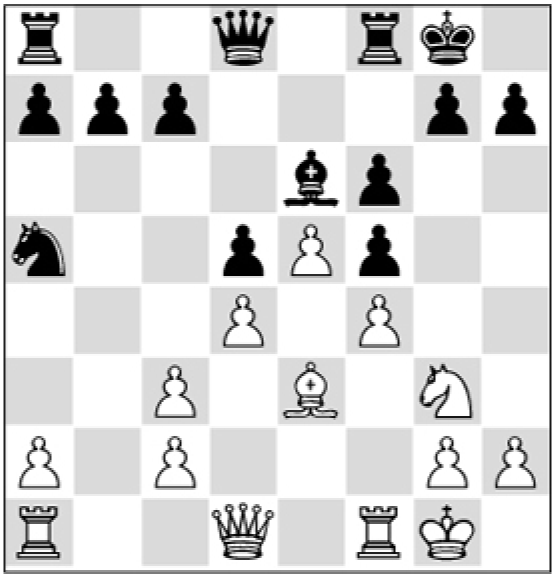
With this move Black has overcome his opening difficulties.

9.♗xf5 exf5 10.f4 ♗e6

According to the ‘law’ that the passed pawn is to be blocked.

11.♘g3 ♗xc3! 12.bxc3 ♘a5!

527



It was only with reluctance and after deep deliberation that I resolved on this diversion on the extreme flank. It looks risky, inasmuch as the situation in the center is by no means secure. For one of the postulates among my basic principles in fact states that a flank attack is correct only when one’s own center is secure. Yet, in the position before us, White cannot compel his opponent to play …fxe5. But if he himself captures, he gets the point e5 (after …♖xf6) to be sure, but Black, by bringing up his reserves, can mitigate this danger.

13.♕d3 ♕d7 14.♖f3 g6 15.♘e2 ♖f7 16.h4 h5 17.♔h2 ♖af8!

The reserves – see the previous note.

18.♖g3 ♔h7 19.♘g1!

Heading for g5 or e5. We can see that the allies are well versed in the art of maneuvering and are opponents to be taken seriously.

19...♖g7 20.♘f3 ♕a4

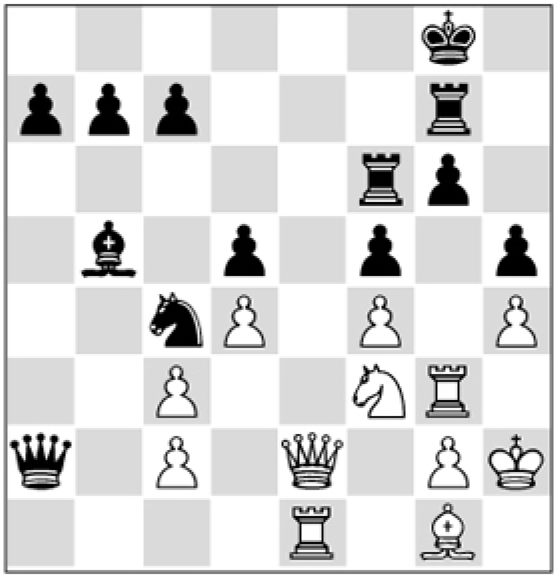
At last Black proceeds with the attack begun at move 11. This slowness does him credit.

21.exf6 ♖xf6 22.♘g5+ ♔g8 23.♗g1 ♘c4 24.♖e1 ♗d7!!

This very simple strategic retreat reveals my plan of defense. According to my system the ideal of every operation along a file is penetration into the 7th and 8th ranks. But here the breakthrough squares e7 and e8 have been safeguarded and the g3-rook cannot participate as it doesn’t have access to the e3-square.

25.♘f3 ♗b5 26.♕d1 ♕xa2 27.♕e2

528

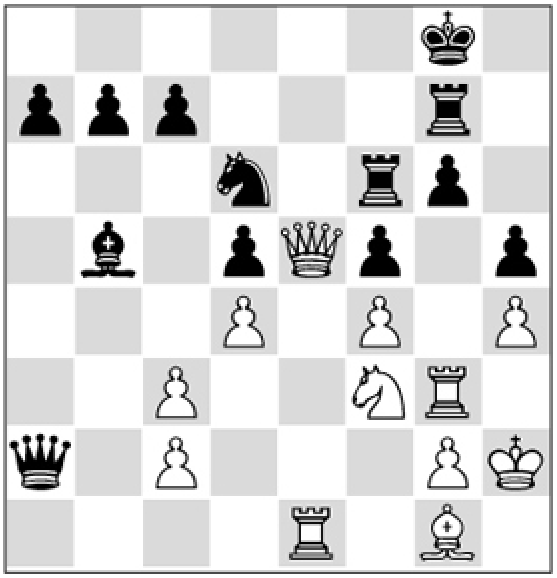


27…♘d6!!

With this retreat a maneuver is begun that seems to be designed to neutralize the apparently so powerful e-file. Less good instead would have been 27…♕a3, with the idea of securing his booty with 28…♕d6: 28.♘e5 ♕d6 29.♘xc4 ♗xc4 30.♕f2 ♖e6 31.♖e5!, when White still has drawing chances, whereas the cold-blooded text maneuver is winning.

28.♕e5

529



28…♘e8!

With this the regrouping, …♖d6 and …♘f6 is threatened, by which the knight and rook will have traded places. If White prevents this by 29.♘g5 (29…♖d6? 30.♕xe8+ and mate next move), he will undoubtedly be very strong on the e-file, yet the characteristic feature of the position, namely the wedge position of the white queen, will prevent the first player from taking advantage of the file. For instance, 29.♘g5 ♗c6! 30.♖ge3 ♕xc2, or 30.♖e2 ♕c4 (blockade!) 31.♖ge3 a5 and wins, since 32.♘e6? is impossible because of 32…♖e7, and he has no other effective move available along the e-file. In the game the continuation was

29.♘d2 ♖d6 30.c4 ♗d7 31.♖c3 ♘f6

Now the difficult regrouping (under enemy fire) has proven successful.

32.cxd5

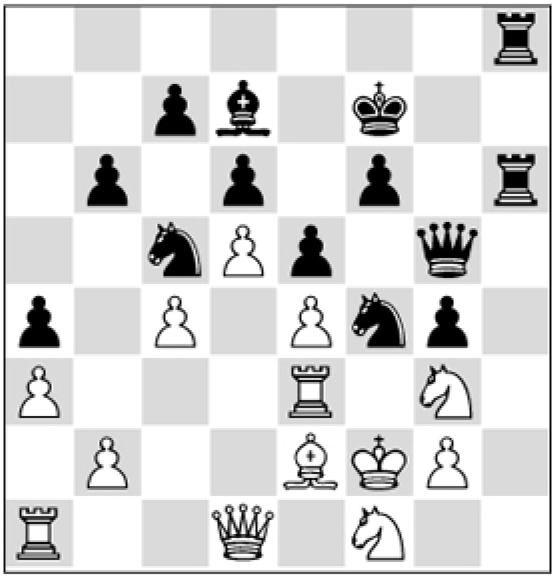
A gross blunder, but even after 32.♕e2 ♖e6 33.♕d1 ♖ge7 White’s game would be hopeless.

32…♘g4+

0-1

Lastly, we offer two game conclusions.

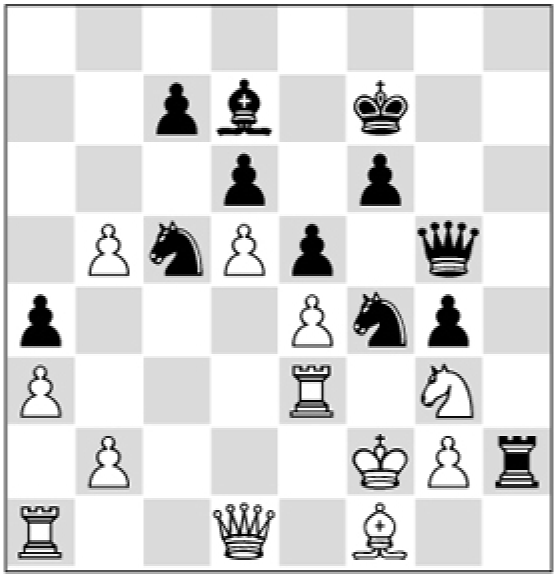
530



Vestergaard-Nimzowitsch
From a simultaneous exhibition vs. 25 opponents, played 22 November 1922 in Vejle, Denmark

As the diagram position shows, Black first looked to initiate hostilities on the queenside, but then chose to make the king's wing the base of an attack. White has assumed a tenacious defensive position. I was on the move and after some thought played **1…b5!!**. This caused a good deal of astonishment among the spectators – Black has no troops on the queenside! But the sequel was: **2.cxb5 ♖h2 3.♘xh2 ♖xh2 4.♗f1**

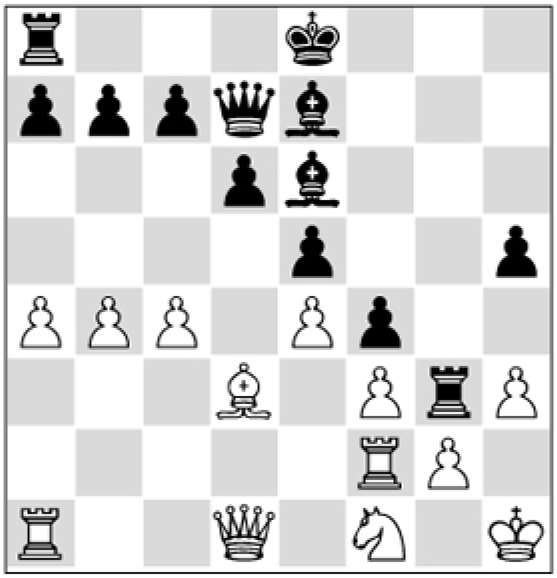
531



4…♗xb5! Now all is clear. The push on the queenside was designed as a diversion against… the kingside. **5.♗xb5 ♘h3+ 6.♔f1 ♕xe3 7.♕e1 ♕g1+ 8.♔e2 ♕xg2+** and mate in two moves.

The next example too, from very recent tournament praxis, is distinguished by the intertwining of a double ‘diversion’.

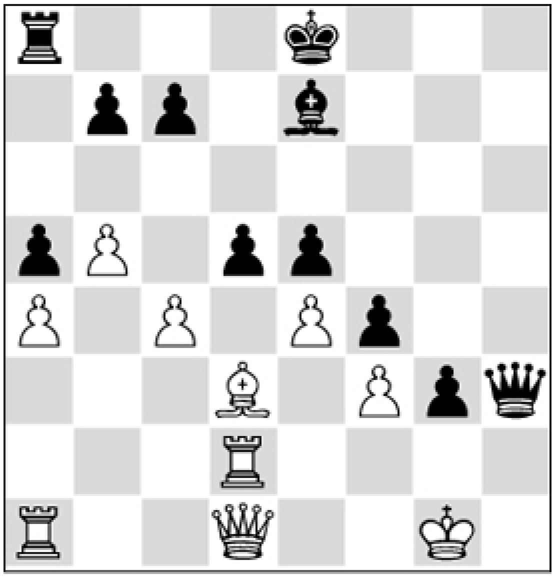
532



Seifert-Nimzowitsch

Leipzig, November 1926 The play went: **1…h4 2.♘xg3 hxg3 3.♖d2** and there now followed an advance on the other side. **3…a5** My opponent countered with: **4.b5**, but after **4…♗xh3 5.gxh3 ♕xh3+ 6.♔g1 d5!!**

533



(the point!) he resigned, for the check on c5 will be catastrophic.

Correct was 4.♗f1; e.g., 4…axb4 5.♖b2 c5, with a pawn structure that augurs a draw.

With this example we conclude our discussion of position play. We now devote ourselves to historical investigations of what transpired in the period 1911-1914, the ‘chess revolution’.

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Appendix

On the History of the Chess Revolution 1911-1914

1. The general situation of things before 1911

The first harbinger: I launch an assault against the arithmetic understanding of the center (on the occasion of my annotating a few games in the Wiener and Deutsche Schachzeitung). My article, ‘Is Dr. Tarrasch’s “Die Moderne Schachpartie”, etc.’

To say it up front: within the framework of a textbook, especially as space is limited, I am unable to write a fundamental or even profound study of my chosen theme. I will settle for re-publishing my revolutionary article from that earlier period. The same is true with respect to the important games that pertain to this theme.

So we have prepared our very esteemed reader and, having done so, may now, with a clear conscience, turn to this yellowed parchment.

First, however, an observation to which I want to assign enormous value: it is not my intention here to engage in polemic. Everything that smacked of polemic therefore had to be purged from the document. And if some small bit of polemic should be found adhering to this or that slip of paper, such a thing occurred against my will or because I could not rid the article of this mote without doing a disservice to the historical truth.

The first sortie against that orthodox doctrine of the center, which expected well-being only from the pawns, I published in 1911 in the notes to my games vs. Salwe and Levenfish at Karlsbad 1911. That foray became even more pronounced in the game notes in the article on Tarrasch’s *Die Moderne Schachpartie* (‘The Modern Chess Game’) (below).

Furthermore, I began to doubt (to put it mildly) the omnipotence of the forward-marching enemy center. In particular, I discovered the line 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 (stem game: Spielmann-Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1911).

Likewise, I was the one who could grasp the significance of the maneuver that today (to a considerable extent) has become common knowledge: play against a complex of weak points of a certain color. Compare my opening vs. Tarrasch in 1912: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♗d3 ♗xd3 5.♕xd3 e6 6.♘f3 ♕b6!** and …♕a6. This exchange signifies play against the weak light squares. I made use of this intention even more incisively in my game with Leonhardt (San Sebastian 1912).

There would be no point in recording all the scorn and derision directed at me during this period, or even in pointing it out. Suffice it to say that no one in the whole history of chess has been subject to such abuse. I was rewarded for my new ideas with invective and at best a systematically practiced silence.

The revolution occurred in 1913. It came in the form of an article, given below, that was revolutionary to a high degree.

I emphasize again that any polemical intent was far from my mind – I sanitized the article, removing from it any polemical sharp edge. I want to emphasize that when I mention Tarrasch in that article I refer to him less in a personal way and more to the whole school he represents.

I also omitted the bold outcries in bold print around the article, which worked like fanfares trumpeting on all sides. For the revolution is all over and done with – we don't need the fanfares anymore, only further development that is leisurely and quiet.

And now the article.

Is Dr. Tarrasch's *Die Moderne Schachpartie* Really a Modern Conception of the Game?

by A. Nimzowitsch

(Published in 1913 in the *Wiener Schachzeitung*, Nos. 5-8)

The collection of games published by Dr. Tarrasch under the title *Die Moderne Schachpartie* really represents a critical textbook on the openings in a unique form.

The whole (and, by the way, highly felicitous) scheme of the book, by which Dr. Tarrasch arranges his work, consists of a grouping of games (annotated by him) by opening. He demonstrates first the inadequate lines of play, later goes over to the better continuations, then finally pleasantly surprises us with the ‘only correct’ way of playing.

From my heart I wish for the book a wide distribution – it is chock full of ‘system’, expressed with clarity.

And yet it looks to me as though Tarrasch’s conception does not by any means fully coincide with the new, truly modern understanding of chess.

Above all, Dr. Tarrasch is and will remain for us the author of *300 Chess Games*. In this book he sought in the first place to meet the need of the public for strictly logical precepts, in the form of laws, for playing chess. Everything offered in game annotations before him is either a framework of variations or else too deep (Steinitz!!), for the latter is a mistake.

Steinitz’ only mistake after all was that he was at least fifty years ahead of his generation! So it could happen that he might become notorious for his baroque ideas; and it is not without interest that it was just Tarrasch, his popularizer, who originated this altogether unmotivated, but today still generally widespread, point of view.

But to return to *300 Chess Games*. In this book Dr. Tarrasch offers only very little that is his own, for the ideas in the book originate with Steinitz. Nevertheless, I should like to describe the book as partially classical! And I think rightly! It is full of such linearity in its thinking, and the individual primeval elements of the game, such as the open file or the center, are presented in so ideal a way, completely disentangled from other motifs, that the aforementioned designation as ‘partially classical’ has to strike us as fully justified!

Textbook examples of the utilization of the open c-file (or, if you will, simply of any open file [the game against Von Scheve]), or the undermining of a pawn center that has advanced without proper motivation and without sufficient pawn protection (pawns at e4 and d5, as in the game vs. Metger), or the utilization of the two bishops, followed by a typical advance of pawns to hem in the enemy knights (vs. Richter) – all this we find in abundance in this excellent book.

Notably, however, there are cautionary examples of the ‘surrender’ of the center, which according to Dr. Tarrasch is utterly reprehensible.

Here, as with other topics in the book, we see a relentless linearity – I do not say ‘consistency’, for that would not be the same thing. (Linearity: this is a sham-consistency – if you will, a consistency for the eye instead of for the inquiring mind.)

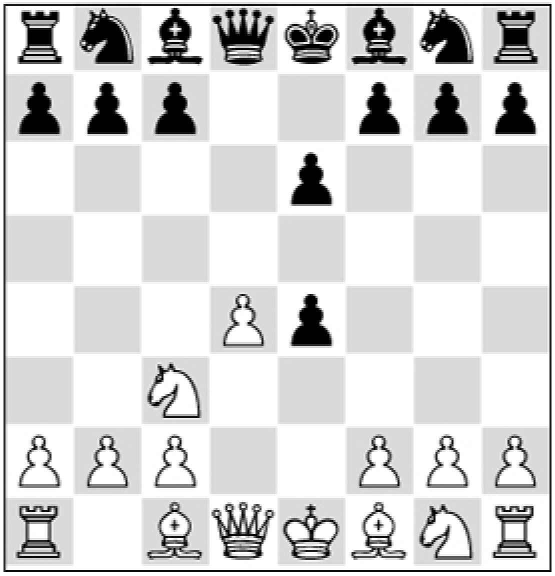
But chess nowadays is incomparably more complex, our conception of it has deepened! New ideas seek their validation. In many matters, but especially with respect to the ‘surrender of the center’, the thinking of players today is no longer as categorical – I would even say as orthodox – as formerly.

But Dr. Tarrasch confronts this new outlook with coolness and aloofness, as is demonstrated again in his new book *Die Moderne Schachpartie*. What does he have to tell us about, for instance, the French Defense (pages 359-385)? As we know, this is the opening in which the problem of the center emerges as the dominant factor, and every other consideration is eclipsed. Whether it be through the pawn chain e5, d4, and c3 vs. f7, e6, d5 and perhaps c4 in its recognizable, closed form or through the variation involving the capture …d5xe4, or, finally, the leveling exchange variation with e4xd5 e6xd5, the problem of the center always stands in the foreground.

The problem regarding the variation 3…dxe4 is a particularly graphic case. This line has been in development, with diligence and loving care, for more than twenty years despite all the ‘purists’ who moaned about the ‘surrender of the center’. And indeed with the most beneficial results: the fact that in …b7-b6 (Rubinstein) an improvement was found that nearly put the value of 3.♘c3 in doubt and which moved me to revive 3.e5, with which, as is well known – again, despite all the purists – I have achieved the greatest successes!

In his new book, Dr. Tarrasch places himself at the vanguard of the purists, in that he ignores completely the very deep variation 3…dxe4!. The only game he cites (No. 187) – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4? (the ‘?’ is that of Dr. Tarrasch) 4.♘xe4 ♗d7 (as we know, the only correct move is 4…♘d7!) – has in common with the modern variation only the move …dxe4 and not its idea. And the fact that he chooses this game as an example (with the colorless continuation 4…♗d7) from the abundance of material available to him (let me just mention the many wonderful games Rubinstein played with this variation), speaks clearly enough! By letting a pawn disappear from it (…dxe4), the center is not given up by a long shot! (See Diagram I)

I



The concept of the center is a lot broader than that! See my notes in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, 1912, to the game Nimzowitsch-Salwe.

It is true that it is just the pawns that are best suited to the formation of a center, since they are the most stable element, but pieces positioned in the center can substitute very well for the pawns. And pressure exerted on the enemy center, emanating from rooks or bishops directed at it, can be of considerable significance!

This is the truly modern view, especially in the way that I have advocated it.

Dr. Tarrasch, however, assigns …dxe4 a question mark: ‘surrender of the center!’ And yet Black, in this position, with his d-file and the bishop diagonal b7-h1, has without a doubt a firmer presence in the middle (d5!) than his opponent, despite the ‘surrender of the center’!

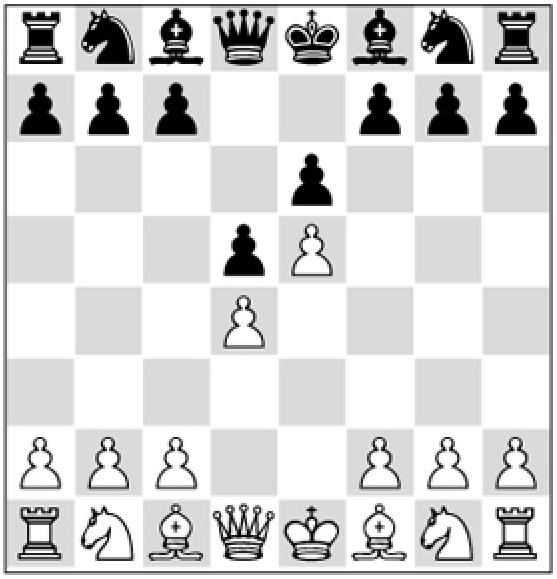
I cannot fail to recognize the highly educative importance of Tarrasch’s linearity – for the beginner, particularly. But for the more advanced player, working by himself to improve his game, this lineal play is less recommendable.

So much for the variation 3…dxe4.

Let us now turn to the variation 3.e5. This move, which I have recently re-introduced, is disapproved of by Dr. Tarrasch. He presents his game vs. Leonhardt and writes, ‘White turns the game into a gambit, with all the chances and counter-chances of gambit play. More correct is c2-c3.’

The philosophical foundation I have established as a basis of the variation 3.e5, and which entitles me to make use of the move 3.e5 as my own intellectual property, is the following (see Diagram II).

II



With e4-e5, White transfers his attack from the point d5 to the point e6, which has been rendered immobile according to the law: **An object of attack must first be fixed in place.** This move gives rise to a pawn chain, with both sides impeding one another. The natural aim for both sides at this point is the destruction of the cramping pawn chain; this attack must be directed against the ‘foot of the chain’; by Black against d4 (…c7-c5) and by White against e6 (f2-f4-f5) – that is the watchword! Incidentally, Black can also transfer the attack from d4 to c3 (…c5-c4, fixing the pawn at c3, followed by …b7-b5-b4, etc.), according to a precept of mine: *The attack on a pawn chain can be transferred from one member of the chain to another*.

But what is the right moment for this ‘transference’ of the attack?
Judging this is extraordinarily difficult, but in most cases there are certain hints inherent in the position.
The move e4-e5 has to be played as early as the third move, for the inclination to delay the advance until the moment when it wins a tempo, that is, with an attack upon a knight on f6, seems less appropriate, and this for the following reason:
Symptomatic in the constriction of Black’s position is the unavailability of f6 for his knight. But if White allows the knight there, if only for a moment, then he grants his opponent the blessing of the f6-square – that is, he permits Black’s knight to come into the game by way of f6 in sufficiently favorable circumstances, and the greater part of the hemming-in has then to be seen as illusory!
I am certainly no ‘gambit player’, but a policy of restriction (that is, e4-e5 on the third move) carried out uncompromisingly can in fact bear the loss of a pawn!
My pawn sacrifices vs. Spielmann and Leonhardt (San Sebastian 1912) must be seen from this wholly original vantage point.
Dr. Tarrasch’s remark (cited above) tells us how far removed he is from this innovative and certainly modern point of view. And so it seems he wishes to stamp me as a gambit player!
Needless to say, 3.♘c3, as already discussed, is faulty also on account of 3…dxe4!.

And now to the usual variation 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.♗xe7 ♕xe7. Here Tarrasch’s discussion is missing Alapin’s variation.

Alapin’s wonderful results – I refer only to the variation …f7-f6 (7.♘b5 ♘b6 8.c3 a6 9.♘a3 f6) or to the strategically brilliant maneuver …♘b8-c6-d8-f7 after a preceding blockade of the f4-pawn by …f7-f5 (with …g7-g5 to follow) –unquestionably form the cornerstone for further researches and is not to be overlooked.

Tarrasch also treats less than favorably Svenonius’ ingenious idea in the normal variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.exd5 exd5, and now ♗g5, ♗d3, and ♘ge2, which looks very strong. Dr. Tarrasch mentions the line only in passing.

Of all his discussions of the French Defense, we consider of theoretical value at best his stated views found in the notes on the games Tarrasch-Teichmann and Tarrasch-Lowtzky. His commentary deals with a purely positional treatment of the main variation 4.♗g5, proposed by Rubinstein, by which White, without posting the bishop aggressively at d3, ‘gives up’ the center in order to besiege his opponent in the most effective way using the pieces (knight at e5, etc.) – principles with which we are very sympathetic and which I successfully implemented many years ago in my games with Salwe and Levenfish at Karlsbad 1911, and indeed in the variation 3.e4-e5.

Naturally, in these terse, aphoristic remarks by Tarrasch on the correct strategy in the French we fail to see any alternative to the missing or imprecisely outlined important variations I. 3…dxe4!; II. 3.e4-e5; III. …♘c6 (Alapin), and the Svenonius line.

Let us now turn to the discussion of the Spanish Game in Tarrasch’s book (p. 3-113). Again the same picture! The same over-estimation of the importance of the center (that is to say, of its occupation by pawns) combined with a panic-stricken dread of a possible surrender of it.

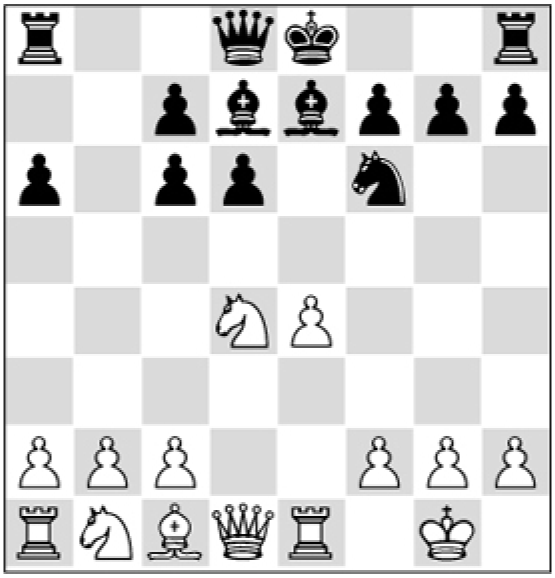
The fact that this way of viewing the center is based on an incomplete and mistaken concept of the ‘center’ is something we have discussed already in the above.

A direct consequence of this point of view is Tarrasch’s condemnation of the cramped defense, which can in fact readily lead to the surrender of the center, and which for that reason alone earns Tarrasch’s condemnation.

Heading the ‘inadequate’ defenses to the Spanish this time is Steinitz’ line …d7-d6(?) – the question mark originates with Dr. Tarrasch – with or without …a7-a6.

After the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 d6 7.♗xc6+ bxc6 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♗d7** (see Diagram III).

III



Dr. Tarrasch gives preference to White’s game because of his ‘freer play’, which can be used for all manner of possible attacking continuations

If Dr. Tarrasch did not conclude from purely external features of the position, such as ‘the freer game’, the internal value of the position, which in reality depends only on the specific situation in the center, he would never give preference to White’s game.

Let us examine the position in Diagram III from the standpoint of its internal value.

First, we note the white pawn at e4 and the black pawns at d6, c6, and c7, a structure that defines the nucleus of the position. This structure shows us the unmistakable propensity on the part of Black to undermine the central pawn at e4 with …f7-f5 or …d6-d5. We recognize further the e-file as a natural base of operations for Black and the d-file as the same for White. Black will establish himself on e5 – that is the base created by the pawn on d6 – with a view to further operations on the e-file! Black counters White’s similar intentions and methods – namely, occupying the support point d5 (created by the e4-pawn) and making use of the d-file – with the hampering c6-pawn.

We realize therefore that Black’s use of the e-file will be of greater effect than White’s activity along the d-file; that is, Black exerts more pressure on the white center than vice versa.

Moreover, and I mention this merely in passing, the compact pawn mass on d6, c6, and c7 represents a force that can be deployed against the enemy queenside (e.g., pawns on c5 and a5 against a white pawn at b3).

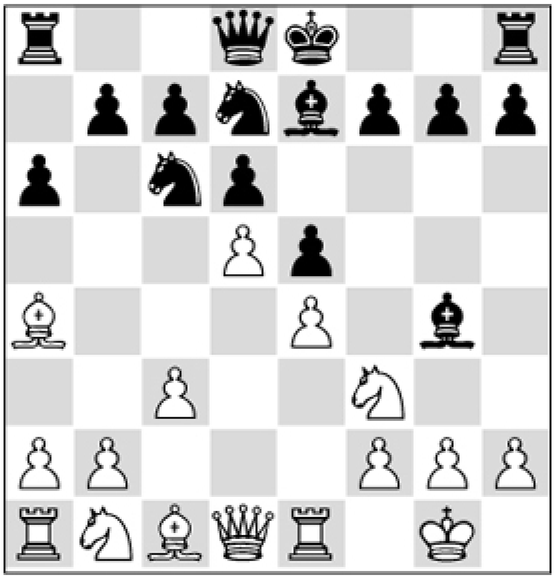
We cannot therefore speak of an advantage for White in the diagrammed position, a fact that was convincingly demonstrated over the course of the matches Lasker-Janowsky and Lasker-Schlechter.

In any event it is clear that evaluating this difficult position with a catchphrase like ‘freer game’ does not meet the requirements of contemporary chess.

What we aspire to today is a deep analysis that proceeds from the core of the position! We are no longer served by catchphrases like ‘free, comfortable game’, etc.!

We cannot do otherwise than to offer another, quite striking example. After the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 d6 7.c3 ♗g4 8.d4 ♘d7 9.d5** (Diagram IV; from Lasker-Janowsky),

IV



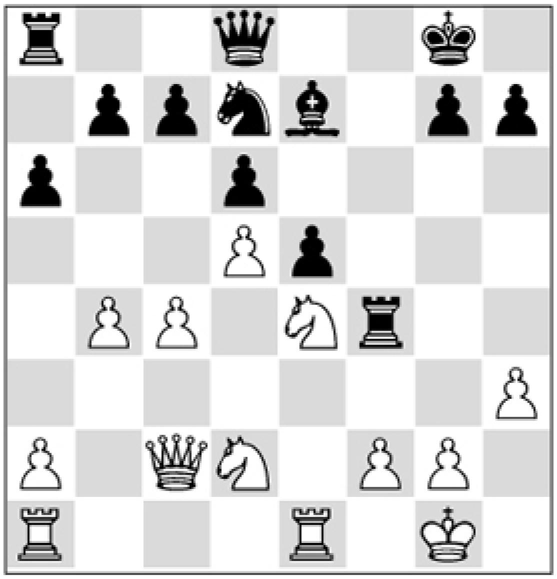
Tarrasch makes the following remark (exceedingly characteristic of his way of looking at the game): ‘This move (d4-d5) is almost always bad when Black can initiate a counter-attack later with …f7-f5.’ This is incorrect. The move …f7-f5 can only be seen as a natural reaction to the d4-d5 advance and as such is not to be feared. A brief analysis that takes into account the nature of the position will immediately convince us of this.

With the move d4-d5 White transfers his attack from e5 to d6 – this is entirely analogous to the move e4-e5 in the French Defense –, an attack he will initiate with c3-c4-c5. He is prepared to grant his opponent the possibility of an attack on his own pawn chain with …f7-f5 (corresponding to …c7-c5 in the French).

Nothing says that by this attack White has to find himself at a disadvantage – nor does current praxis say so, according to which, Dr. Tarrasch, although a ‘theoretician’, apparently prefers to base his judgments.

The consequence of the d4-d5 advance in the game above was the following position (Diagram V).

V



We see that the position has already evolved a good deal further. White is about to advance with c4-c5 while Black is thinking of operating on the f-file. But the opening of this file is all that was accomplished with …f7-f5. White's center – and this is the most important thing – hasn't been damaged at all. White has had to 'surrender' the center, admittedly, but the knight on e4, supported by the other knight, is full compensation for the pawn that was at e4 and dominates in all directions.

The fact that Lasker lost this game has nothing to do with the merits of the d4-d5 advance.

À propos d4-d5, Tarrasch's discussion is lacking one of Maroczy's excellent games, in which he carried out the following subtle strategy: on the 'frightful' advance …f7-f5 he simply took off the impudent rascal, and indeed at a moment when it was being supported effectively by its colleague on g6! This gave rise to pawns at e5 and f5, which were certainly wonderful to behold!

But they were 'hanging' just a bit, and that was enough for Maroczy to besiege and annihilate them!

It is superfluous to say something about the 'best defense' 3…a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4(!; the exclamation mark comes from Tarrasch). Schlechter's innovation 8…♘xd4 (after 5…♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 d5 8.a4?) has in fact brought the value of a2-a4 into question, but the strength of the line for White is not by any stretch based solely on this move! Indeed, it is not founded on the possession of the a-file, which merely represents a bit more ‘freedom’, but, much more, after 8.dxe5 ♗e6, on the situation of the pawn at e5 and the possibility of unpleasant consequences for Black after ♘d4 (e.g., 9.♘d4 ♘xd4 10.cxd4), since the c7-pawn is backward. Incidentally, Mr. Malkin has shown in *Schachwelt*, and supported this with extensive analyses, how much Dr. Tarrasch has overrated the line with 5…♘xe4.

In his treatment of the Four Knights Game, to which we now wish to turn, Rubinstein’s variation 4…♗c5 5.♘xe5 ♘d4 is missing (Tarrasch-Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1912), and in particular the probably adequate rehabilitation of the variation with …♘c6-e7, which Spielmann was the first to adopt (with success) vs. Tarrasch at Hamburg 1910. Furthermore, it is striking how little attention Tarrasch gives to the new variations and to the innovative rationale for them that I introduced in the 6.♗xc6 variation, even in the face of the broad sympathy they have already gained in the chess world (Capablanca, for example, has taken them over from me).

And now to the Queen’s Gambit.

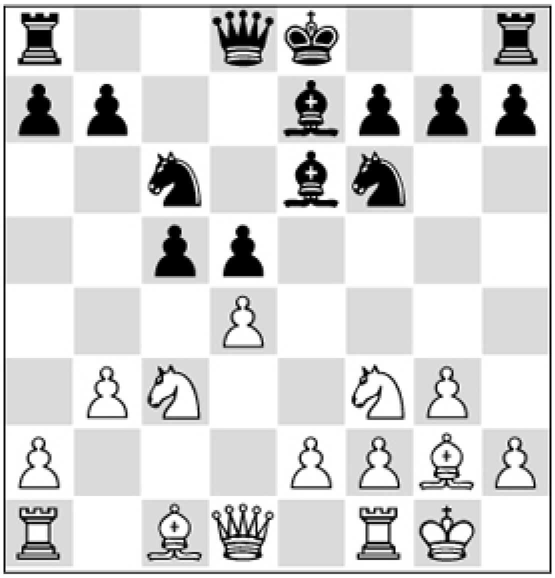
If we had much to object to in Dr. Tarrasch’s treatment of the Spanish, the French Defense, and the Four Knights Game, in the case of the Queen’s Gambit we are obliged to offer our unbounded praise. His classification of the opening is lucid, his understanding of it is characteristically sharp-minded, and his selection of games is also at a high level.

Only one thing remains unclear. Why does Dr. Tarrasch insist that the variation 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6, which even today is giving birth to an abundance of fresh possibilities and which again is about to become a modern opening variation – why does he designate this line as ‘orthodox’? And why on the other hand does he describe the variation 3…c5 that he originated, which leads to insufficiently energetic play for Black and which, one can say with confidence, has been relegated to the archives of the past, as ‘modern’?

I ask myself, can it stimulate anyone to select a variation in which one ends up, as is the case in the 3…c5 line, with an ‘Isolani’, which by all

the rules of the art has been blockaded – we are thinking here of the bishop at b2 –, a pawn that is also already most painfully fixed by the other bishop on g2; can it, I ask, entice anyone to choose this variation?
That is the very least that White – after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5? 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♗e6 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0-0 ♘f6** and now even, if you will, **9.b3** – can comfortably achieve according to modest claims (see Diagram VI).

VI



Can it seem tempting to anyone to choose this variation, when the ultra-modern variation 3…♘f6, wrongly labeled ‘orthodox’ by Tarrasch, offers a free and easy game in which one can achieve a safe development, a solid game, and a powerful initiative?
I see in the following variation an admission of the defenselessness of the arguments against 3…♘f6: after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6! 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0-0** a position arises in which White, to the extent that he has grown up with the concepts ‘open space’, ‘win of tempo’, and ‘rapid development’, is at a loss to know what to do. If 7.♗d3, 7…dxc4 would cost him a tempo, 7.♖c1 would be inappropriate for other reasons, and 7.♕c2 – the last subterfuge – allows the proven safe course 7…c5! (correct at this point) 8.0-0-0 ♕a5!, as Teichmann has shown in numerous games.
And the quite ‘old’ but by no means obsolete line with …b7-b6 has its merits too; cf. the game Pillsbury-Schlechter (Hastings 1895). Quite

modern also is an ‘irregular’ method of defense to the Queen’s Gambit – I will mention here only the Dutch Defense, which is treated rather shabbily by Dr. Tarrasch, and the Hanham Variation.

The latter is a thorn in Dr. Tarrasch’s side. He cannot stand to have the motif of the free play of the pieces (by which he swears) be subordinate to the principle of a sound pawn structure.

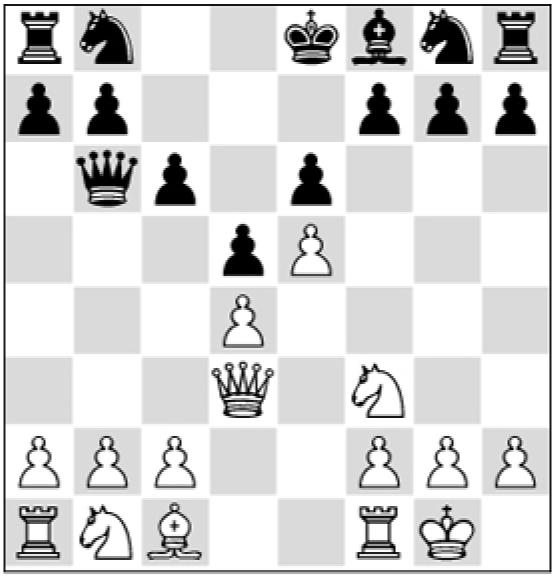
But contemporary chess praxis also disagrees with him. In recent times, this deep, even if somewhat risky, style of play has won a new adherent in the person of Capablanca. We have, by the way, searched *Die Moderne Schachpartie* in vain for the game Teichmann-Nimzowitsch (San Sebastian 1911), a classic and model game for the Hanham Defense, a game incorporated into all the textbooks.

In conclusion, a few words about the Caro-Kann and the Scandinavian Defense 1.e4 d5. Dr. Tarrasch declares the former ‘most certainly unsound’, inasmuch as 1…c6 ‘does nothing’ for Black’s development – again, an un-modern criterion favored by Tarrasch and one that is of little practical use in the evaluation of openings.

The move 1…c6 involves an ambitious plan to prove that 1.e4 is premature; at least that is the deep-level plan that I consider the basis of the opening. Whether the discoverer recognized the full import of the move 1…c6 is another question. What is certain is that this opening has a future ahead of it.

Think of my absolutely revolutionary-looking innovation **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♝f5 4.♗d3 ♝xd3 5.♕xd3 e6 6.♘f3 ♛b6 7.0-0** (Diagram VII)

VII



7…♛a6; that is, forgoing …c6-c5 (adopted as standard decades ago) for the purpose of a thorough exploitation of the light squares that have now become weak (the consequence of the exchange of the bishop on d3). Here we see how the Caro-Kann facilitates development! Dr. Tarrasch hasn’t a word to say on any of this.

Dr. Tarrasch examines only three games with the Caro-Kann; for the Scandinavian Defense, on the other hand, he sees fit to cite ten games. One should have been enough, namely the game Rubinstein-Bernstein (San Sebastian 1911), in which Rubinstein, following Lasker’s prescription, demolished 1…d5 thoroughly and for all time! But unfortunately it is just this game that is missing.

It is interesting to compare the Caro-Kann and the Scandinavian. Both aim at e4, but whereas the first, with …c7-c6, lends the necessary strength for the ensuing …d7-d5 advance, the second opening, in order not to lose a ‘developmental tempo’ (!), plays 1…d5 immediately, with the result that Black gets a free, but a lost game!

We have now become acquainted with Dr. Tarrasch’s perceptions and opinions on various openings. We had the opportunity to admire his ‘linearity’, which from time to time, as in *300 Chess Games,* rises to the level of the classic. But we have also seen how this linearity often causes him to judge positions superficially, and according to purely external features.

When we examined this in detail, we found that his limited understanding of central strategy does not correspond to the modern conceptions of it. The same is true for his habitual disregard of the characteristic features of a position, and in fact of the pawn configuration that informs the nature of the position (especially in the center). Seen in this light, we had to reject his catchphrases, like ‘open game’, ‘cramped defense’, etc., as limiting the natural development of chess philosophy. In particular, we had to emphasize that we will never be able to agree with Dr. Tarrasch’s view that the center is ‘given up’ as soon as the full complement of pawns in the center has suffered a loss.

These criticisms aside, the book offers much that is excellent. Chess literature has been enriched by *Die Moderne Schachpartie*, and this book is certainly very interesting and recommendable, even if unquestionably it is not modern. In particular, the novice in positional play can gain strength by his rectilinear thinking, and even for the expert this new work of Dr. Tarrasch definitely offers many worthwhile, interesting, and stimulating suggestions.

2. The revolutionary theses

(a) The elastic center.
(b) The harmlessness of the pawn roller.
(c) The weaknesses in a complex of squares of a certain color.

If we examine more closely the article quoted above, we find that the author rejects especially the arithmetic conception of the center. What is of decisive importance is solely the greater or lesser degree of mobility possessed by the enemy mobile center. If it is restrained, it is weak; if it is blocked, it is half lost!

The article (and, even more, an article published in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* under the title ‘My System’) does battle with the formalistic understanding of the elements, such as the backward pawn, targets for attack, etc. Such elements always depend on the ‘inner value’ of the position (as determined by the prevailing pawn chain) and not on freer play and similar such ‘formal’ considerations. In the article

‘Is Dr. Tarrasch’s (etc.)’, it is also pointed out that often it is very profitable to operate against a weak enemy complex of squares of a certain color. The idea that a blockade that has been thoroughly carried out can tolerate the sacrifice of a pawn must seem completely new. (Until now, we could only understand the logical connection between ‘sacrifice’ and ‘attack’, and not of ‘sacrifice’ and ‘blockade’.)

If we further consider the fact that the ‘relative harmlessness’ of the pawn roller was already recognized in 1911 (the stem game is Spielmann-Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1911), we find ourselves in the pleasant situation of already having grasped the integral components of what would later be called the hypermodern school.

Réti’s most ingenious idea, that ‘development’, too, must incorporate a battle plan, is quite correct, but it does not constitute an integral part of the hypermodern trend – this is something the players of the classical period already recognized.

Similarly, we unfortunately have to reject the sharp-witted attempt on the part of Tartakower, who would like to see ‘the new’ in the ‘variability of weaknesses’. (‘An enemy strength, too, can be treated as a weakness.’) We shall see later that this idea is based on a certain disregard of the idea of a ‘reflexive weakness’.

3. The revolutionary theory is converted into revolutionary praxis. The stem game of the ideal Queen’s Gambit.

As early as the summer of 1913 I played with my student and training partner, the agronomist Giese, about 20 or 25 serious games in which I had the opportunity to test the value of my new idea, which went against all tradition: I renounced completely the occupation of the center with pawns. We couldn’t find a refutation – in fact no one had succeeded in finding one to date – so I dared in all seriousness to risk the idea in the All-Russian Masters’ Tournament. I had mislaid the manuscript, but eventually I was able to find the game in a chess column. We present this game below, and cannot but designate this game as a document of the greatest significance in the history of chess.

Game 38

Bernhard Gregory
Aron Nimzowitsch
St Petersburg 1913/14

The stem game of the ideal Queen’s Gambit.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♗g5

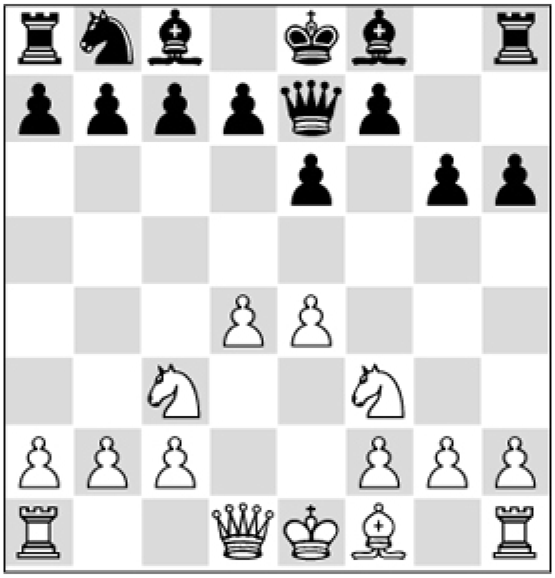
On 3.c4 I wanted to choose 3…b6. The d5-point should remain constantly unoccupied.

3…h6 4.♗xf6 ♕xf6 5.e4 g6

Black has the bishops and strives to retain them in the play that follows.

6.♘c3 ♕e7!

534



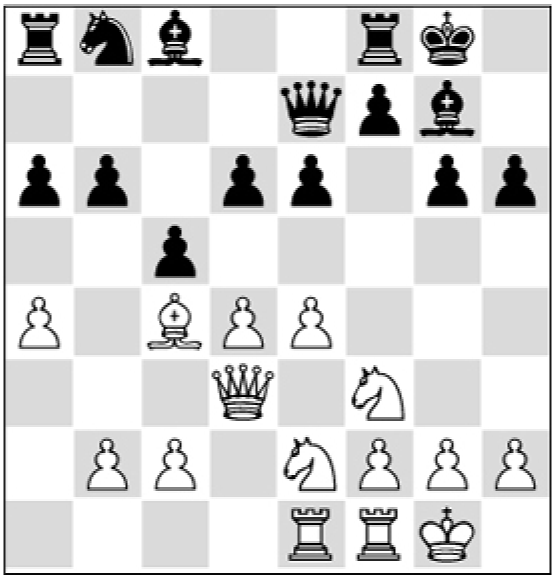
In order not to expose himself after 5…d6 to 6.e5, opening up the game.

7.♗c4 ♗g7 8.0-0 d6 9.♕d3 0-0 10.♖ae1 a6 11.a4 b6 12.♘e2

The mobility of White’s center is to be assessed as slight, for any further pawn push would be easily intercepted; e.g., 12.e5 d5!, or 12.d5 e5!.

12…c5

535



The critical position in the stem game

Here a stratagem emerges that every hypermodernist should take note of – I mean the steady and sustained attack directed against the pawn mass. This is to be understood as follows: White’s threatened pawn advance must first be divested of its inherent sharpness (which in this case occurred through 6…♕e7!). Only when this has been achieved may we speak of the mass as effectively immobilized and ready to be attacked, for only an object of contention that has been rendered immobile can be made into an object of attack.

13.c3 ♝d7 14.b3

To be considered was 14.♘d2; e.g., 14…♗xa4 15.f4, with certain chances.

14… ♛e8 15.♛c2 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♝d3 ♛c8 18.dxc5 dxc5 19.e5 ♞c6 20.♝xb5

On 20.♘g3, 20…b4 would follow; e.g., 21.c4 ♗e8!, with the better game.

20…♞xe5 21.♞xe5 ♝xb5 22.♞f3 ♛b7 23.♞d2 ♝c6 24.f3 ♜fb8

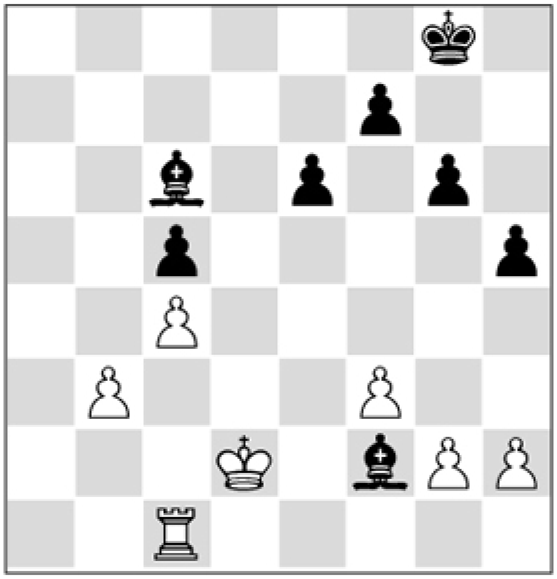
Now the bishops come into their own.

25.♞g3 ♛a7 26.♜f2 ♝d5 27.♚f1 ♛a2 28.♛xa2 ♜xa2 29.c4 ♝d4 30.♜fe2 ♝c6 31.♜d1 ♜b2 32.♜c1 h5 33.♚e1 ♜a8

Threatening complete paralysis by 34…♖aa2, since 35.♖b1 is then impossible because of 35…♖xb1+ and 36…♖a1.

34.♘h1! ♖aa2 35.♘f2 ♖xd2 36.♖xd2 ♖xd2 37.♔xd2 ♗xf2

536



A win for Black still lies quite far in the future. In the play that now follows Black maneuvers against c4, but also retains the possibility of infiltrating with his king (to g3). But this alone would not suffice; Black must also advance his pawn majority. But the need to do this is cause for concern, for the position would then be loosened up and the c-pawn would be nothing to trifle with.

38.♖b1 ♚f8 39.b4 cxb4 40.♖xb4 ♚e7 41.♖b8 ♗d4 42.♖c8 ♗d7 43.♖a8 e5 44.♚c2 ♗c6 45.♖c8 ♗a4+ 46.♚d3 ♗d7 47.♖c7 ♚d6 48.♖b7 ♗g1 49.h3 h4

The g3-point now seems ripe for invasion.

50.♖b8 ♗e6 51.♖a8 ♗b6 52.♖h8 ♗f2 53.♖a8 ♗f5+ 54.♚e2 ♗b6 55.♖h8 g5 56.♖g8 f6 57.♖f8 ♚e7 58.♖b8 ♗d4 59.♖b5 ♗g6 60.♖a5 ♗f5 61.♖a6 ♗c8 62.♖c6 ♗d7 63.♖a6 ♗c5 64.♚d3 ♗f5+ 65.♚e2 e4!

At last the right moment for this!

66.♖c6 ♗d4 67.♖a6 ♗e6 68.♖a4 e3 69.♚d3 ♗c5

Now the king journey to g3 is threatened.

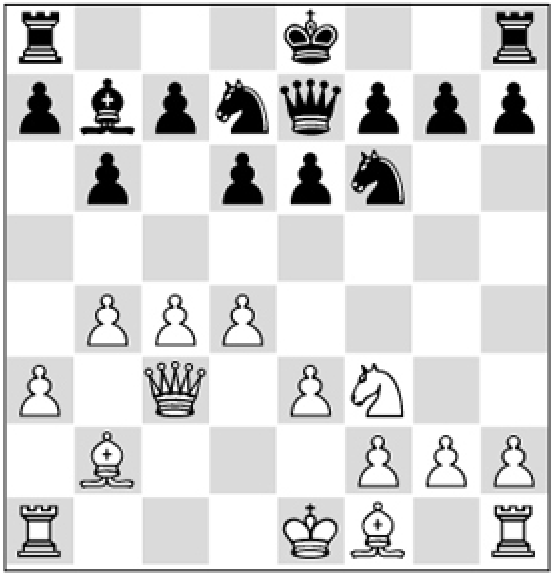
70.♖a6 ♗xc4+

White resigned.

4. Further historical struggles

The game just presented never failed to arouse an animated interest. My colleagues at that time, who copied each other's play, remained true to their imitative selves and tried in the very same tournament to adopt my innovation. But it was only after Levitsky lost brilliantly with it to Flamberg that the masters saw that this entirely new system of play could not be assimilated quickly and easily, for naturally a new system of play requires the application of a new method of play. I continued my studies and adopted this opening at the St. Petersburg 1914 Grandmasters' Tournament, against Janowsky. This game, or rather the first 18 moves of it, we have already given in connection with Diagram 385. I played a further game at St. Petersburg vs. **Dr. Bernstein;** I had Black in this game as well, and it went: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b7 5.e3 ♗b4 6.♕b3 ♕e7 7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.♕xc3 d6 9.b4 ♘bd7** Now Black stands very well, the mobility of the white center is minimal, and the b7-e4 diagonal is of significance. **10.♗b2** (Diagram 537)

537



10…a5 Good enough, but 10…♘e4 followed by …f7-f5 was preferable. **11.♗e2 axb4 12.axb4 ♖xa1+ 13.♗xa1 0-0 14.0-0 ♘e4 15.♕c2 f5 16.♘d2 ♘xd2** Here the hypermodern 16…c5 seems more in the spirit of the opening. **17.♕xd2 ♖a8 18.♗c3 ♕e8** With 18…♘f6, anticipating d4-d5, Black still has a good game. After the text there followed **19.d5! e5** 19…exd5? 20.♗f3. **20.f4 ♝c8** and the game ended in a draw after a series of highly dramatic complications.

In the same tournament it happened that Alekhine took over my innovation from me – the ideal Queen's Gambit – and was able to gain success with it, which of course could only be pleasing for me. For it meant a great deal to me in terms of the correctness of my (revolutionary) principles.

And now for some more historical games.

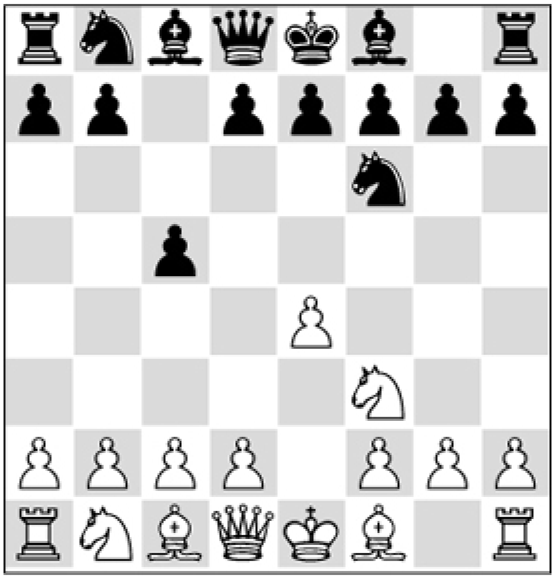
Game 39

Rudolf Spielmann
Aron Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1911

The stem game for the thesis of the relative harmlessness of the pawn roller.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♞f6

538



Spielmann now began to think. After a few minutes I looked up from the 64 squares and saw my dear old comrade in arms, Spielmann, completely bewildered! He looked at the knight at times in a manner flush with confidence, then in the next moment in a way that was filled with doubt and mistrust. In the end, he refrained from the possible pursuit with e4-e5 and played the careful 3.♘c3.

The following year I adopted 2…♘f6 against Schlechter. In the book of the congress we find the following comment by Tarrasch: ‘Not good, as the knight is chased out at once, but in the openings Mr. Nimzowitsch goes his own way – which, however, cannot be recommended to the public.’

This bit of ridicule has a quite pervasive effect – e.g., in souring young talented players. But there’s one thing it cannot do. It cannot prevent in the long run the victorious breakthrough of new, powerful ideas! So too here. The old dogmas, such as the ‘fossilized’ doctrine of the center, the worship of ‘free play’ and all the formalistic conceptions generally – who today can bother with these? But the new ideas, pathways that supposedly lie beyond the pale, not to be recommended to the public, have for us become avenues on which, broad or narrow, the greatest possible feeling of certitude pervades our consciousness.

My game with Schlechter proceeded as follows: (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6!) 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4. Why, says Tarrasch, should 4.c4 not be played here – Black’s knight then has to go to a poor square. But no, even in the case of 1.e4 ♘f6 (Alekhine), the ‘chasing-out’ 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4 amounts to nothing more than a compromising of White’s position. In the Schlechter-Nimzowitsch game there followed 4…cxd4 5.♕xd4 e6 6.♗c4 ♘c6 7.♕e4 d6! 8.exd6 (or 8.♗xd5 exd5 9.♕xd5 dxe5 with the two bishops and a sound pawn majority) 8…♘f6! 9.♕h4 ♗xd6 10.♘c3 ♘e5!, and Black got a certain freedom to maneuver in the center of the board.

3.♘c3 d5 4.exd5 ♞xd5 5.♗c4 e6 6.0-0 ♝e7 7.d4 ♞xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.♘e5 ♛c7

What now follows is play against the hanging pawns that will be with us shortly.

10.♗d3 ♞c6 11.♗f4 ♝d6 12.♖e1 cxd4!

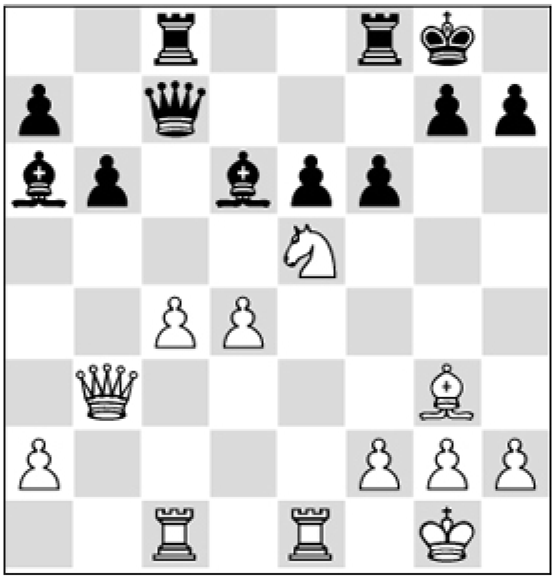
This exchange, in combination with 13…♘b4, is the point of the variation begun with 9…♕c7.

13.cxd4 ♞b4 14.♗g3 ♞xd3 15.♕xd3 b6 16.c4 ♝a6

The hanging pawns, which will certainly be subject to sharp attack but which in the end will nevertheless show themselves to be vigorous and robust. The game is level.

17.♖ac1 ♖ac8 18.♕b3! f6

539



19.♕a4?

19.c5 ♗xe5 20.dxe5 led to a draw.

19…fxe5 20.dxe5 ♝a3! 21.♕xa3 ♝xc4 22.♖e4 ♛d7 23.h3 ♝d5

With this bishop placement Black’s advantage has become clear.

24.♖e2 ♛b7 25.f4 ♛f7 26.♖ec2 ♜xc2 27.♖xc2 ♛g6 28.♕c3

White cannot very well hand over the c-file; if, however, 28.♖c3, then 28…h5! 29.h4 ♖xf4.

28…♝xa2! 29.♗h4 ♝d5 30.♗e7 ♜e8 31.♗d6 ♛e4 32.♕c7 h6 33.♖f2 ♛e1+ 34.♖f1 ♛e3+ 35.♖f2 a5 36.♗e7 ♛e1+ 37.♖f1 ♛e3+ 38.♖f2 ♚h8

Directed against ♗f6.

39.♗d8 ♛e1+ 40.♖f1 ♛e3+ 41.♖f2 ♛e1+ 42.♖f1 ♛g3 43.♖f2 ♜f8 44.♕xb6 ♜xf4 45.♗e7 a4

A passed pawn plus a mating attack, a very nasty state of affairs.

46.♔f1?

He was lost in any case.

46…♛xg2+

White resigned.

Game 40

Aron Nimzowitsch
Rudolf Spielmann
San Sebastian 1912

This is the stem game for the ‘sacrifice with blockading tendencies’.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.dxc5 ♗xc5 6.♗d3 ♘ge7 7.♗f4!

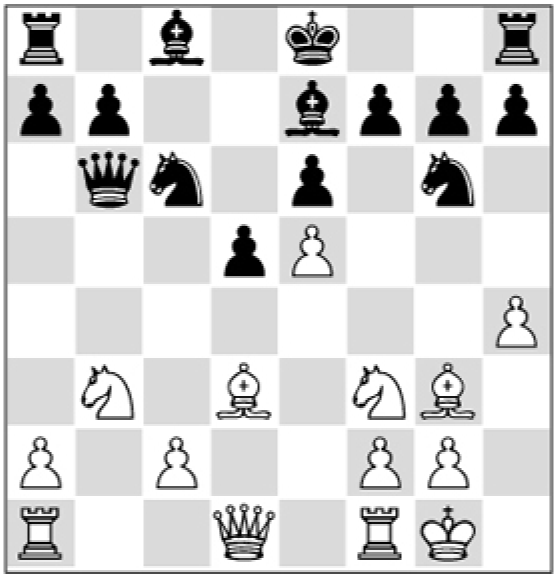
Overprotecting the strategically important e5-pawn.

7…♕b6 8.0-0 ♕xb2

This was not your usual ‘pawn sacrifice for the attack’. The sacrifice was exclusively a matter of wanting to maintain the point at e5, to make it the basis of a blockading action. We know this theme from the game of merels (or ‘Nine Men’s Morris’, in which a piece is sacrificed in order to enclose the enemy superiority with one’s own minority. Brought over to chess, this strategy was a revolutionary act!

9.♘bd2 ♕b6 10.♘b3 ♘g6 11.♗g3 ♗e7 12.h4

540



This too is not an ‘attacking move’ in the generally accepted sense. The meaning of this move is ‘Away from the key point e5!’ There followed

12…♕b4 13.a4 a6 14.h5 ♘h4 15.♘xh4 ♗xh4 16.c3 ♕e7 17.♗h2 f5

This move, opening up all the byways for his opponent, had to be made in order to get air for his king. As a result, we now have attacking play.

18.exf6 gxf6 19.♘d4 e5 20.♗f5

with a strong attack.

White won on the 44th move (see Diagram 231).

My game vs. Leonhardt from the same tournament proceeded along a similar path.

A. Nimzowitsch – Leonhardt

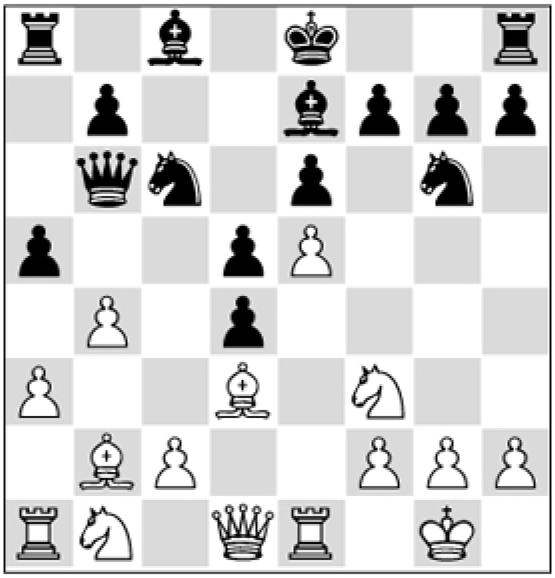
San Sebastian 1912

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3

Later I discovered the still more revolutionary 4.♕g4.

4…♕b6 5.♗d3 cxd4 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.a3 ♘ge7 8.b4 ♘g6 9.♖e1 ♗e7 10.♗b2 a5

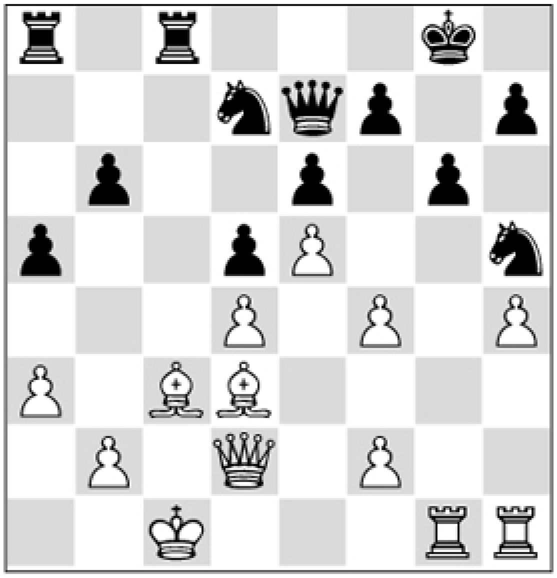
541



Now he even loses the pawn. After 10…a6! we would have our battle situation: a pawn plus against a policy of constriction.

The strategy just outlined was seen with particular vividness in a game I played in 1923. See the position in Diagram 542.

542



Brinckmann-Nimzowitsch (1923)

Black played **19…b5!!**. Sacrificing a pawn for the sake of trading off the d3-bishop. After this the blockade (carried out by a knight on f5) will come into effect. The game continued **20.♝xb5 ♜ab8 21.♝e2 ♞b6** More precise was the immediate 21…♘g7. If then 22.h5, Black plays 22…♘b6; then there is a forced exchange at c4 (after ♘c4 ♗xc4) and eventually a subsequent occupation of f5, with a positionally winning game for Black. **22.♚d1** Black could seek salvation by 22.♗xh5 ♘c4 23.♕c2 ♘xa3 24.♕d2. **22…♞c4 23.♝xc4 ♜xc4 24.♜g5 ♞g7 25.h5 ♞f5 26.hxg6 hxg6** and Black won without difficulty.

5. The expansion and development of the chess revolution in the years 1914 to 1926

The subject before us furnishes enough material for a monograph. But lack of space forces us into an immensely vast ‘wise moderation’. We note only the most important events, while reserving a more thorough appraisal for a treatment of pamphlet length.

Alekhine’s 1.e4 ♘f6 is the most brilliant ‘post-revolutionary’ event to be noted. Certainly the idea underlying this innovation is not entirely new, for it is in fact based on the harmlessness of the pawn roller, a viewpoint I propagandized with my variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6. But

Alekhine’s move surprised and astonished the chess world, and I will not in any way deny his idea the predicate ‘brilliant’.

Quite interesting too is Réti’s attempt to make use of the strategy I discovered concerning the elastic center. On 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 the reply 2…dxc4 is probably not bad; e.g., 3.♘a3 c5! (a move stemming from me) 4.♘xc4 ♘c6, aiming to build up with …f7-f6 and …e7-e5.

Also worth mentioning is Grünfeld’s interesting defense 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5! 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3! 6.bxc3 ♗g7, with a subsequent assault on the white center with …c7-c5.

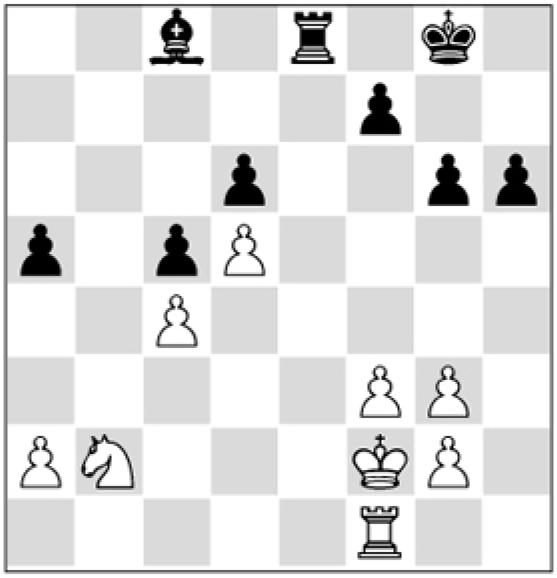
Ingenious and original, even if pertaining only to a specific detail, is Sämisch’s move 7…♘e4 after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3. This early invasion by the knight, as anti-pseudo-classical as it could possibly be, has found numerous adherents (in various positions) and has proved itself most fruitful.

But in terms of ideology, in the years from 1914 to 1926 nothing new was accomplished, if for the sake of argument we exempt the new ideas found in this book, e.g., over-protection and prophylaxis. Tartakower’s interesting attempt to fashion new revolutionary ideas in chess must be seen as having come up short. We will discuss this, since it is of relevance, even if only briefly.

See Diagram 543.

Tartakower wants to see in the course of the game portrayed here evidence that the hypermodernist, if he wishes, can treat every enemy strength as a weakness (therefore going beyond the typical weaknesses, such as backward pawns, etc.). Hence, ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way – in plain language, an enemy weakness’.

543



Jacobsen-Nimzowitsch, Copenhagen 1923

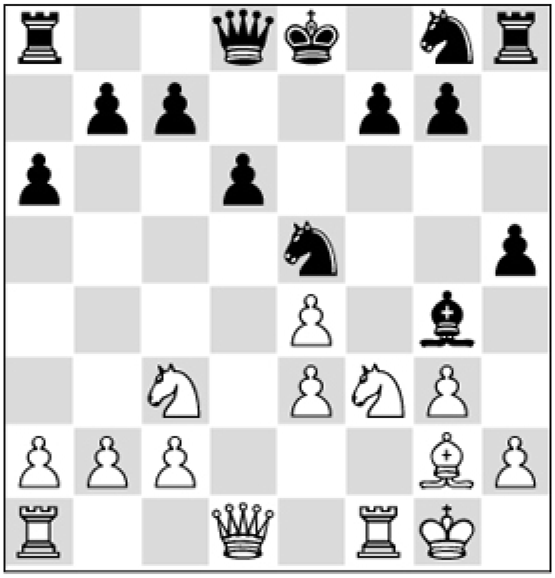
The game proceeded as follows: **34…♝f5 35.♜c1 h5 36.♜c3 a4 37.♞d1 g5 38.♞e3 ♝d7 39.♚e2 f5 40.♚d2 f4** And now Black broke through on the kingside, which just a few moves ago still looked strong and capable of being defended, namely with **41.gxf4 gxf4 42.♞d1 ♚f7 43.♞f2 ♜g8**, etc.

But it is obvious to anyone who has read this book that from the outset White's king suffered from a reflexive weakness – that is, his protective force was tied to the weaknesses at c4 and a2, so that the white kingside came across as inadequately protected. The moral of the story: only a weakness can be attacked. It need not of course be a traditional weakness, one that is glaringly obvious, but it has to be a weakness, even if it is only a reflexive weakness.

We moderns are bound to the laws of logic, just as the pre-moderns were, only with the difference that we strive for an internalization of the lifeless dogmas so that we may revivify them. But logic demands that we try to blow up the enemy position from the weak side outward. The principle that we are to attack our opponent's strength is a modern error, nothing more. All that the deeper-thinking chess player has to do is this: broaden the concept of 'weakness'. A pawn that is deemed organically fully intact can nevertheless be weak; e.g., in certain unpropitious conditions in the terrain or in the case of a reflexive weakness, as in Diagram 543 and similar positions.

In the game Nimzowitsch-Spielmann (1905), after **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♞xd4 ♝c5 5.♝e3 ♛f6 6.♞b5 ♝xe3 7.fxe3 ♛h4+ 8.g3 ♛d8 9.♞1c3 a6 10.♞d4 ♞e5 11.♝g2 d6 12.0-0 ♝g4 13.♞f3 h5?** (Diagram 544; 13…♗xf3!) the e5-knight had degenerated to a ‘bluff-piece’ – if you will, a piece that in and of itself would be strong but which gives his overall position, loosened by …h7-h5, the stamp of weakness.

544



White swept off the bluff-piece: **14.♞xe5!! ♝xd1** Better, all the same, was 14…dxe5. **15.♞xf7 ♛e7 16.♞xh8 ♝g4 17.♜f7** and White’s attack must break through.

We note that it certainly seems the most profitable to attack such a weakness, which in one way or another forms the strategic nerve of the enemy formation, e.g., the base of a pawn chain.

With this, we have come to the end of our investigations. Before we take our leave of the reader, we offer one more game, and in addition refer him to a game collection that will most likely be published this year, one that I think of as substantiation for my system of principles.

Game 41

Aron Nimzowitsch
Anton Olson
Copenhagen 1924

In this game seven white pawns develop greater mobility than eight black ones. In this way, thought (the motive force) triumphs over raw material.

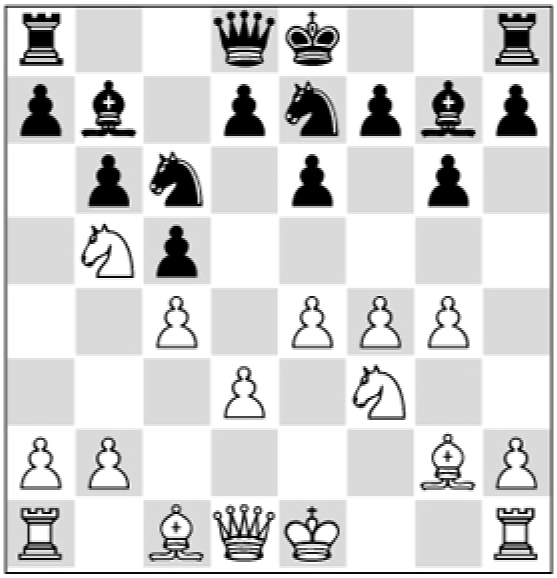
We saw the main characteristic of the recent chess revolution, as we remember, in an internalization of the lifeless dogmas. In the present game, this internalization is palpably clear. So we present the game for the benefit of our interested reader.

1.f4 c5 2.e4 ♞c6 3.d3 g6 4.c4! ♝g7 5.♞c3 b6 6.♞f3 ♝b7 7.g4

The collective mobility of the white kingside pawns can already be faintly noticed.

7…e6 8.♝g2 ♞ge7 9.♞b5!

545



To provoke …a7-a6, after which the need of the b6-pawn for protection is then to be made the basis of a sharp combination.

9…d6 10.0-0 a6 11.♞a3 0-0 12.♛e2 ♛d7 13.♝e3 ♞b4

On any other move 14.♖ad1 and d3-d4 would follow, with advantage to White.

14.♞c2! ♝xb2 15.♜ab1 ♝c3 16.♞xb4 ♝xb4

Or 16…cxb4 17.♗xb6; cf. the note to White’s 9th move.

17.♗c1!

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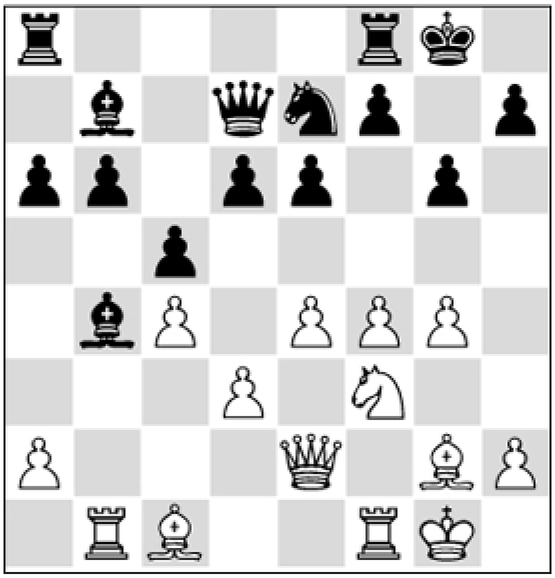


White has skilfully wrested the long diagonal from his opponent.

17…f6 18.♗b2 e5 19.g5

The connection between ‘sacrifice’ and ‘blockade’ would be seen even more clearly with 19.f5; e.g., 19…g5 20.h4, with a sustained attack, while the value of Black’s extra pawn would only have been illusory.

19…♘c6

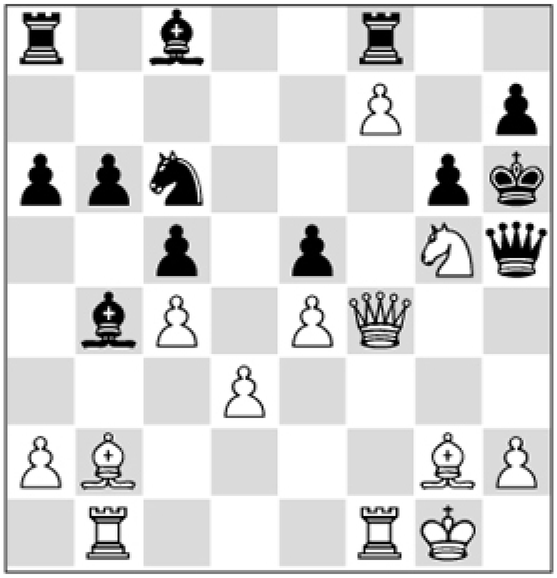
Or 19…fxg5 20.♘xg5 (threatening 21.♗h3) 20…♘c6 21.f5.

20.gxf6 ♕g4 21.fxe5 dxe5 22.♕e3 ♕h5

To cover e5.

23.♘g5 ♗c8 24.f7+ ♔g7 25.♕f4 ♔h6

547



Forced.

26.♘e6+ exf4 27.♗g7#

With this we say farewell to our gracious readers.

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The Blockade

By blockade we mean the mechanical stopping of an enemy pawn by a piece. This mechanical stoppage is achieved when one's own piece stands immediately in front of the pawn to be blockaded. For example, a black pawn at d5 is blockaded by a white knight on d4.

It is customary, at least in master practice, to block the enemy pawn. But to my knowledge no attempt has so far been made to provide a theoretical rationale for the necessity of this strategic measure. Once we find such a rationale we will have solved the problem of the blockade!

We can get a little closer to an understanding of this problem by delving deeper into the essential nature of the pawn. One of its most marked peculiarities is unquestionably its powerful lust to expand, its desire to press forward. The free center provides a clear idea of this propensity of the pawn to gain in significance by its advance. Let us look, for example, at the following, previously unpublished, game:

Aron Nimzowitsch
Amateur
Riga 1910

(Remove White's a1-rook and place his a-pawn on a3.)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6

As we shall soon see, Black is willing to let his e-pawn be captured, but now White's center becomes mobile. Hence it would have been more circumspect for Black to call a halt to the potential white pawn avalanche by playing 4…d6.

5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b6

Black is missing his check on b4 and this weakens his defense. The check (we are imagining the a-pawn on a2) would give Black time to consume the e4-pawn. And that would have been an excellent opportunity to hold up White's pawn advance, for – as I am wont to say with facetious pathos – years of experience should have proved to us that a dead pawn… cannot advance any farther. Now, however, after 6…♗b6, the pawn mass is set in motion.

7.d5 ♘e7

In presenting this little game we are able not only to elucidate the pawn’s lust to expand but also to have a chance to behold the meaning of its advance. Had the knight gone to b8 or a5, it would have been driven away or displaced. Thus we note: (a) the propensity to advance is based partly on the wish to demobilize the enemy, and (b) the intention to storm forward with the pawns in order… to get rid of them. A rather suicidal tendency, don’t you think? No, not at all, for by its nature the pawn is also a blocking unit, standing in the way of its own pieces, obstructing their view of the enemy territory, so the suicidal tendency associated with its advance is in fact imbued with power and self-affirmation. So, to summarize, (b) wishes to gain open lines for the pieces (rooks!) posted to the rear of the pawns by advancing the pawns and achieving a breakthrough. Finally, it is also conceivable that the pawns in their advance might attempt to form a wedge (c).

8.e5

So strong is the pawn’s lust to expand (especially the unobstructed central pawn) that it completely drowns out another, also very strong, tendency, namely the striving for development (e.g., by ♘c3)! 8.♘c3 would of course be weaker because of the reply 8…d6, when the center is restrained – inasmuch as the most that could be achieved later would be the action described under (b). But that would be too meager an accomplishment, for White is justified in playing for a pawn wedge (c), which would lead to confinement for Black.

8…♘e4

Black plays for material gain, while White prefers more ideal goals. That is, he will restrain his opponent’s development in order especially to virtually kill the bishop on c8. In the struggle that now begins between two ‘world views’, between the ‘material’ and the ‘ideal’, the latter proves victorious. Remarkably enough, however – as I tend to say facetiously, but by way of explanation – the game was played… before the war!

9.d6 cxd6 10.exd6 ♘xf2

And now the critical position has been reached.

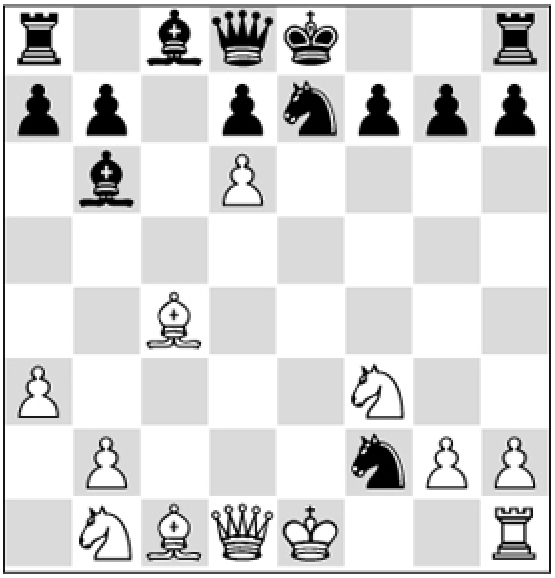


Diagram 1

11.♕b3! ♞xh1 12.♗xf7+ ♚f8 13.♗g5

1-0

The d6-pawn that tied up our opponent was the principal actor in our little drama. But this pawn was nothing more than a ‘wedge’ that crystallized out of the pawn march e4-e5, d4-d5-d6, etc.

In all brevity, let us highlight the inner motivations for advancing the center pawns:

(a) demobilizing the opponent;
(b) opening lines;
(c) constriction by forming a wedge.

Now let us turn our attention to another, exceedingly mobile kind of pawn, namely the passed pawn. While it would appear difficult to restrain an unobstructed center in the long run, it is much easier to hold up the advance of a passed pawn. In any event, it is simpler to establish rules for the latter. Why is this so? Well, because the unobstructed (mobile) center is merely a special case of a ‘pawn majority’. We may speak of a pawn majority in the center – there is no reason why we may speak only of a majority on one of the wings. But if our conception of an unobstructed center is a correct one, then in a pedagogical sense the path to restraining an unobstructed center is considerably more complex. That is to say:

1. How does a pawn majority exert its effect?
2. How does a passed pawn arise out of such a majority?
3. How do we defend against a majority?
4. Why does a central pawn majority have a more incisive effect?
5. What special measures are to be taken against a central majority?

Before we proceed to answer these questions, let us for the moment put the passed pawn under the microscope, for the passed pawn is the crystallized product of a pawn majority and as such can be understood much more easily than the more elastic and more complicated pawn majority.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this discussion, it is fairly well known that passed pawns are to be stopped, although no theoretical foundation for this has so far been forthcoming. I have succeeded in finding one, and although I had originally planned to make this known only with the publication of my book *My System*, I shall do so here for the purposes of this article.

There are three reasons why a passed pawn must be stopped. As to the first reason, let us look at the following typical passed pawn position:

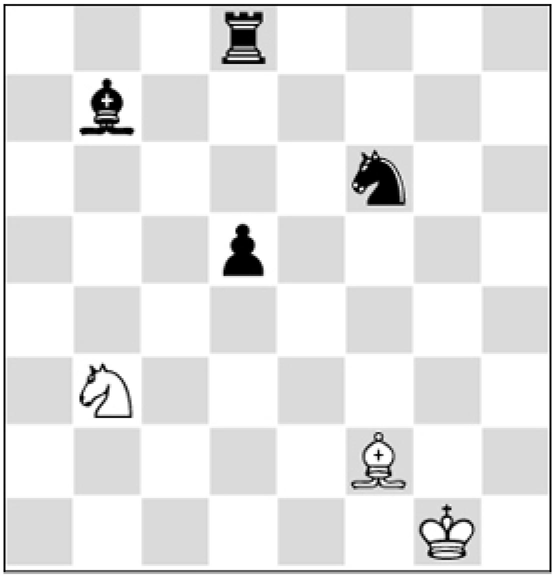


Diagram 2

Black has a passed pawn. This pawn is his pride and joy, so it seems natural that the black pieces protect (the knight on f6 and the bishop on b7) and support (the rook on d8) it. Now the question arises: is it enough for White to restrain the pawn with his knight and bishop or is it necessary to blockade the pawn by placing the knight on d4? Answer: Against the great lust to expand on the part of the pawn, lesser measures, such as restraining by pieces from a distance, are not enough, because, typically, the pawn could still advance even in those instances where it pays for this action with its life – hence, …d5-d4; ♘xd4 or ♗xd4, when the black pieces in the background suddenly come to life. The b7-bishop now has a diagonal directed against the enemy king, the rook has an open file, and the knight gets a new central square. We have already discussed this forced advance and its self-destruction (for the sake of opening lines) under (b). This is a quite characteristic sequence of events in the pawn's lust to expand.

So we say that the first logical reason for the blockade is that the passed pawn, as I facetiously like to put it, is so dangerous a criminal that keeping it under surveillance (by the knight at b3 and the bishop on f2) is by no means enough – no, the gentleman belongs under lock and key, so we take away his freedom completely by placing the blockading knight on d4.

The second reason to be discussed is strategically as well as pedagogically of the greatest importance. In chess, it is optimism that in the end is the decisive factor. I mean that it is of great value psychologically to train yourself to delight in small advantages. The beginner is ‘delighted’ only when he announces mate to his opponent, or even more, when he is able to win his opponent’s queen (for in the eyes of the amateur this is if anything the greater feat). The master player, on the other hand, is already happy and content if he can spot even the shadow of an enemy pawn weakness in a corner on the left half of the board! This optimism constitutes the indispensable psychological basis of position play, and it is this optimism that gives us the strength in every bad situation, however bad it may be, to discover the brighter side of the position, however dim that brighter side may be.

In the case before us we can say that an enemy passed pawn undoubtedly represents an appreciable evil for us, but this evil nevertheless comes with a faint ray of light. The situation is such that we have a chance to blockade the pawn, to safely post the blockading piece right in front of the enemy pawn – which is to say, the blockader is safe from any frontal attack. Example: with a black pawn on c4, a white blockading knight on c3 is not exposed to attacks by the rook (…♖c8-c3) and is more or less safe.

It is important to state that the blockader (the blockading piece), quite apart from its blockading duties, is in and of itself generally well-positioned in other respects. If this were not the case, it would be difficult to refute the objection that it is uneconomical to put a piece in cold storage in this way, just to keep watch over a pawn. And yet in reality the blockade square is at the same time an excellent square in other respects as well – first, because, as already pointed out, the enemy’s frontal pressure is precluded; second, because the blockade square is often an outpost point on a file that is covered by a rook; and third, because the blockader is possessed of sufficient elasticity that it is able if necessary to deploy to any other theater of war as quickly as possible.

The elasticity and its further development are demonstrated in Diagram 9; here we shall content ourselves with providing an example of the second case (the consonance between the blockade square and the outpost point). In the Queen’s Gambit, Black often ends up with an isolated queen’s pawn on d5, and although this pawn seems to be restrained to some extent by the white pawn on e3, we can nevertheless speak of it as half-passed, so great is its lust to expand; this is partly because the d5-pawn is for its part also a center pawn. Here, the d4-square is the blockading square. Now, White also has the d-file, and on it is a fortified point. Where is it? Well, also d4, for according to my definition a point on a file may be called ‘fortified’ only if it is protected by a pawn – here the pawn on e3. A fortified point on a file should however be occupied as an outpost (see my article on open lines, etc., in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* of 1913). In this way d4 becomes a strategically important square in a double sense.
The third reason is this: we might think that the blocking of a pawn represents only a quite local measure, limited to the immediate space around the pawn. A pawn that wanted to advance has been rendered immobile, and only this pawn suffers and nothing else. But such a view is lacking in depth. In fact, a whole complex of enemy pieces is affected: a greater part of the board can no longer be used for brisk maneuvering, and sometimes the character of the whole enemy position can be affected – in other words, the paralysis is transplanted from the blockaded pawn back to the region behind it.

I will give the singular example of the ‘French’ position (Diagram 3).

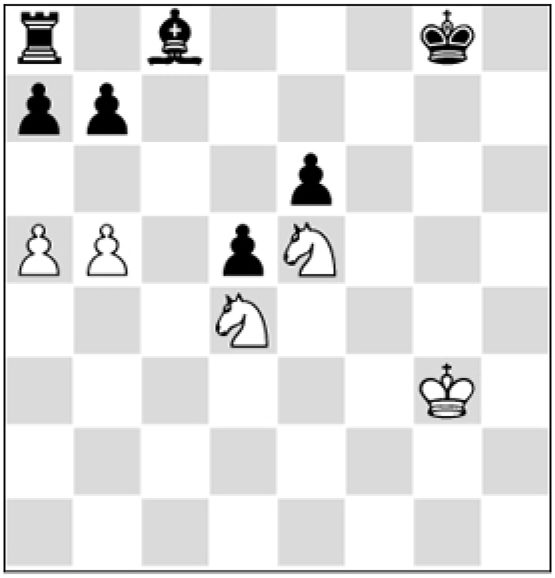


Diagram 3

The pawns on e6 and d5 are thoroughly blockaded, and behold, the whole of Black’s position has consequently become strangely inflexible – the rook and bishop are prisoners in their own camp!
If White now had a passed pawn on h4 he would have excellent winning chances despite the great deficit in pieces!

Our esteemed reader, who has kindly followed the discussion to this point, is requested to turn his attention to the pawn majority. Diagram 4 shows just such a majority.

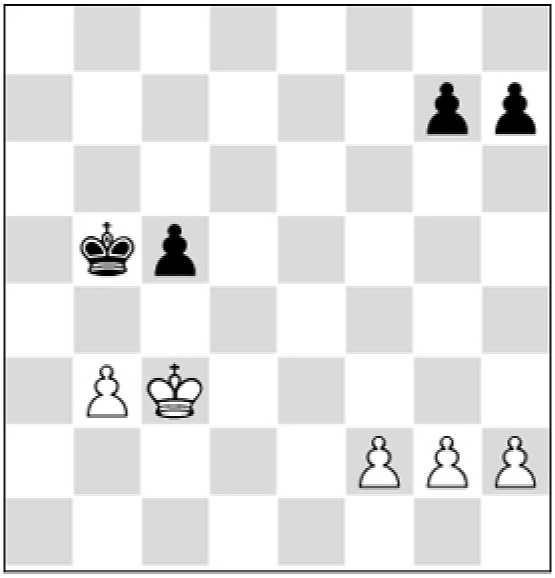


Diagram 4

We see three white pawns in the fight against only two for Black. A sound majority, that is, one not produced from the rank and file, must eventually produce a passed pawn. ‘Nothing easier than that’, our amiable reader will cry out at first glance. True enough, but I want to allow myself the opportunity to set forth one of those little rules that my Scandinavian audience calls ‘unforgettable’, one that can be taken to heart, rather like a Viennese waltz that is always with us. The path to this rule proceeds from a little definition: none of the three white kingside pawns is ‘passed’ at the moment, and yet one of them is undoubtedly less impeded than the others. I refer to the f-pawn, for it at least has no antagonist. The f-pawn will therefore become passed, it is the legitimate ‘candidate’. And we give him this title, and the academic degree ‘Master Candidate’. (Thus, that pawn in a pawn majority that has no antagonist is the ‘candidate.’) And from this we derive the laconic rule: *the candidate has precedence*; a prescription dictated not only by strategic necessity but, much more, as you will grant, from an ‘obligation to be polite’. (Thus not to be forgotten by anyone who calls himself civil, and this we all do.) Stated with scientific precision, the rule is this:

RULE: **The leading edge of the advance is the candidate pawn; the other pawns are to be looked upon merely as accompanying it.**

Hence f2-f4-f5, then g2-g4-g5 and f5-f6. With the black pawns placed on g6 and h5, White plays f2-f4 and g2-g3 (not at once h2-h3 because of …h5-h4, crippling White's pawns), then h2-h3, g3-g4 and f4-f5. How simple! And yet how often we see a weaker player proceed with the g-pawn in the diagrammed position. Then …g7-g5 follows and the majority is worthless. I have often racked my brains over why the less-experienced player starts off with g2-g4. The matter is easy to explain: these players are undecided whether they should begin at the left (f2-f4) or the right (h2-h4) and in their perplexity decide like any good citizen to choose the golden mean…

And now we should like to explain as concisely as we can the extraordinarily complicated method of defending against a majority.

A consequence of the above rule is that the harmonious creation of a passed pawn has to be counter-acted; hence the defender advances in the direction of the candidate in order first to immobilize it to some extent. Once we have been able to make the candidate pawn backward (and therefore drawing forward the companion pawns), the blockade of the once so proud candidate can no longer be prevented, and it will not be long until it finally falls.

An example of the struggle against the majority is my game at the Copenhagen six-masters' tournament vs. Tartakower (Diagram 5).

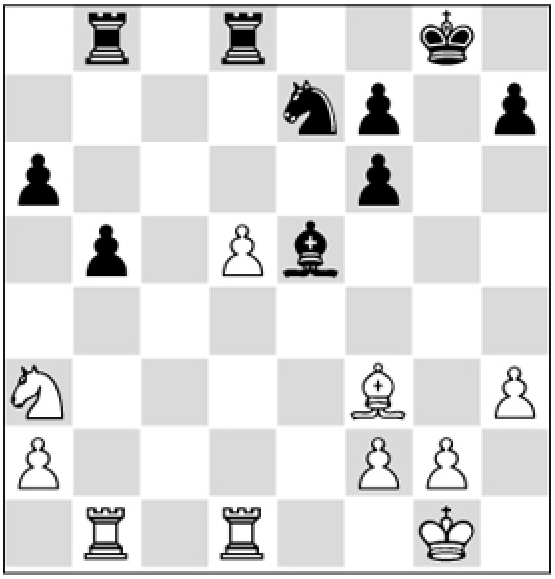


Diagram 5

Black has two pawns against one on the queenside. White has a passed pawn in the center, which however can be firmly blockaded with …♗d6. (We distinguish between a strong and a weak blockade; a blockader that is easily attacked and which gets little or no support from its comrades, is of little effect.) There now followed **23.♞c2! a5 24.a3**. The advance of the candidate is hindered. **24…♞f5 25.♜d3!** To continue the pressure against the candidate with ♖db3. The ideal, of course, would be to lure the pawn forward (…a5-a4), for after that a blockade on b4 would be possible. But that would be unrealistic (fanciful) here. The realistic course, instead, is to hope that no passed pawn arises and at the same time to take steps in the event one is created. Hence the white pieces stand ready if necessary to block a passed pawn on b4 with ♖b3. **25…♜bc8** In the hope of driving away the knight so as to put his own knight effectively on d4. Correct, however, was the blockade of the d-pawn with …♘d6. **26.♝g4! ♜xc2 27.♝xf5 b4** It was vital to blockade the pawn, therefore 27…♗d6. **28.axb4 axb4 29.d6!** The passed pawn's lust to expand, which in this case is played on more fortuitous grounds – namely the hanging rook on c2. **29…♜c3!** Not 29…♗xd6 because of 30.♖xd6, etc. **30.♜xc3 bxc3?** The decisive mistake; the bishop had to recapture. Black should have tried to get a passed pawn on the b-file and not on the c-file. The further course of the game shows why. **31.d7 ♚f8 32.♜b4! ♜a8** It is all the same what Black does now – he is lost is any event. **33.g3 ♚e7 34.♜c4 ♜d8 35.♚g2** Black is lost because the white rook can kill two birds with one stone. It stops the c-pawn and at the same time prepares an action to uproot the blockade on d8. With a passed pawn on the b-file this would not have been possible. **35…h5** The king threatened to march to h6: ♔g2-f3-g4-h5-h6. **36.h4 ♜g8 37.♜c8 ♜d8 38.f4! ♝d4 39.g4 hxg4 40.h5** The uprooting! The black blockaders (king and rook) are now diverted by the passed pawn on h5, with decisive effect. **40…♝b6 41.h6 ♚f8 42.♜xc3 ♚g8 43.♜c8 ♚h8 44.♚g3 ♜g8** To make the blockade more effective with …♗d8. **45.♜e8** Slipping behind the backdrop by which Black had intended to block the pawn (with …♗d8). Now 46.h7 is threatened, forcing checkmate, so Tartakower resigned.

With a bold leap we shall now turn our attention to the fight against a central majority, without bothering with the rest of the ‘majority problems’; otherwise this article would go on indefinitely. Here too, as with any other majority, we see ourselves threatened with the formation of a passed pawn. To make matters worse, however, new threats appear, namely an attack against one’s castled position (the center as an attacking weapon!), introduced by forming a pawn wedge or through the opening of files, and demobilization. I regard the following position of the main actors (Diagram 6) as typical.

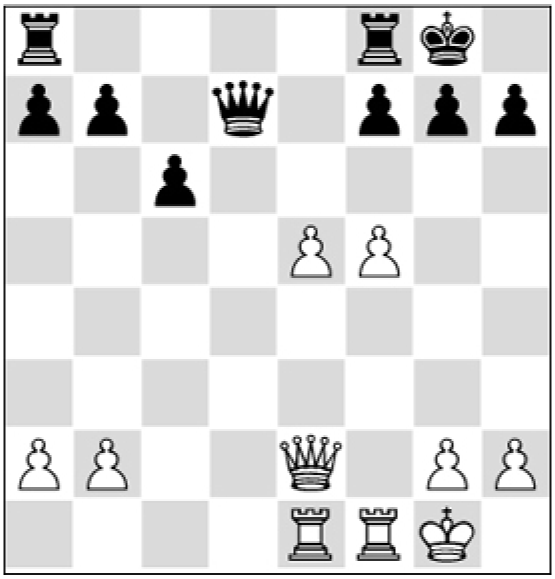


Diagram 6

White threatens his opponent not only with the usual formation of a passed pawn (by advancing the candidate with e5-e6) but still more by creating a wedge with f5-f6. This wedge, after the reply …g7-g6, would be dangerous for Black in that his castled king would be separated from the main part of his army – his communication along the 7th rank would be undermined (the rooks being cut off from the defense of the points g7 and h7). To avoid this wedge formation, Black plays 1…f7-f6, when White gets a passed pawn on e6 and thereby a significant advantage in position. In addition, the f6-pawn could be used as a target of attack by opening the g-file (g2-g4-g5). (As I stated, I have noted the positions of only the most important actors.) It is therefore clear that it was not advantageous for Black to let the two white pawns get to the 5th rank; they should instead have been fixed in place on the 4th rank.

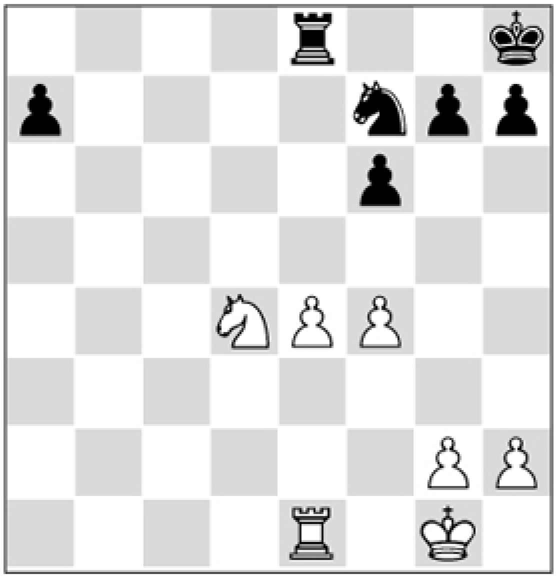


Diagram 7

In the position in Diagram 7, which again shows only the main actors, Black has more or less fixed the candidate pawn on e4. Without hope of ever being able to play e4-e5, White decides to 'sacrifice' his majority per se. He plays f4-f5, when the respective knights establish themselves on e6 and e5. With more pieces on the board, the e6-knight could be the prelude to a strong attack; positionally, however, Black's game is good and his own blockading knight is also very strong (see remarks under the second reason, above), for it hinders the approach of White's attack troops, e.g., a queen going to g4 or a rook to f3, etc.

We have therefore seen that in every battle against the pawn majority the first phase is that of restraining this majority. The ideal final phase, however, consists in blockade.

The desire to stop a mobile pawn horde is understandable in itself; but it is puzzling that it is sometimes necessary to blockade pawns whose mobility is quite limited. This occurs especially when we would like to target such pawns as objects of attack (see Diagram 8).

Now I shall provide four examples to illustrate what has been presented in this article. These four have been taken from my most recent tournament praxis, the Nordic Masters' Tournament of August 1924. After all, this tournament had a very strong entry: in addition to Johner, who only just before had won at Berlin ahead of Rubinstein and Teichmann, Allan Nilsson also played, as did the ingenious theoretician Dr. Krause and the solid young masters Kinch, Kier, etc. Still, I was able to score 9½ points out of a possible 10! I believe in all seriousness that this striking success was due to my deeper understanding of the essence of the blockade! It is true that I sometimes came up short in the face of difficult blockade problems, but this occurred only seldom – really only in the following endgame.

In Round 2, the following position (Diagram 8) arose in the game between me and the excellent master Giersing (one need only think of the brilliant game Giersing-Kinch!)

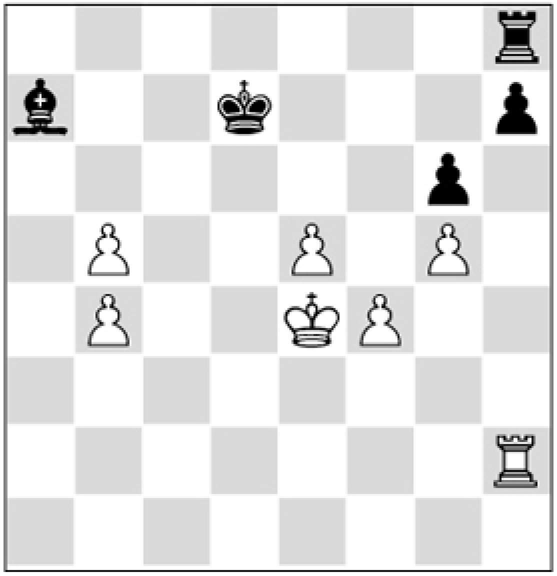


Diagram 8
Nimzowitsch-Giersing
(Copenhagen 1924)

White does not have full material compensation for the missing piece, but his positional superiority is so great that we are inclined by all means to prefer him. In addition to the protected passed pawn on e5 and the strong central position of his king, White's positional advantage is to be seen especially in the unhappy position of the black rook. This rook is chained to a pawn and is thus condemned to complete passivity. The procedure I now chose is combinative in character, but this is not in fact the strongest continuation. Before showing the alternate positional path, let us examine briefly the text continuation from the perspective of this article.

58.f5 gxf5+ 59.♚xf5 ♜f8+ 60.♚e4 ♜f7 Now the black rook has been given new life, but it is just this new rook position that makes possible the combination that now ensues. **61.b6!** Again proof of the pawn's lust to expand! **61…♝b8** If Black accepts with 61…♗xb6, then 62.e6+ ♔xe6 63.♖h6+, etc. **62.♚d5 ♜e7 63.e6+!** See the note to White's 61st move. **63…♚c8 64.♜f2 ♜e8?** This attempt to separate the king and pawn from one another ends fatally, just as in the cinema, in which there, too, the attempt to separate two lovers from one another is harshly punished. And this by necessity, for otherwise the audience would ask for their money back! **65.♜f7 ♜d8+ 66.♚c4 ♜e8 67.b7+ ♚d8 68.♜d7#**

Instead of 64.♖e8?, 64…♔d8 would have made it possible to offer tenacious resistance. But White would have had a clear win if in Diagram 8 he had played **58.♜h6**. The follow-up could be **58…♚e7 59.f5 gxf5+ 60.♚f4!!**, when Black is powerless against the threat 61.g6; e.g., **60…♚f7 61.g6+ ♚g7 62.♜xh7+ ♜xh7 63.gxh7 ♚xh7 64.♚xf5 ♚g7 65.♚e6 ♝b8! 66.b6 ♚f8 67.♚d7 ♝xe5 68.b7,** winning easily.

The next example shows just how much the blockader can retain its elasticity.

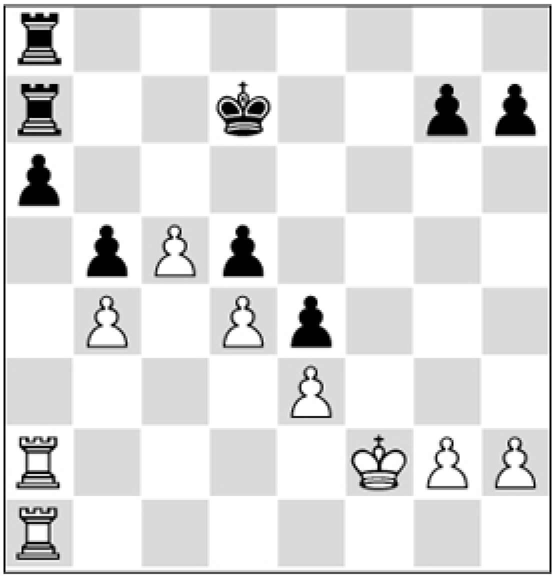


Diagram 9
Nimzowitsch-Allan Nilsson
(Copenhagen 1924)

White has the better position: a6 and d5 are vulnerable pawn weaknesses. The first cripples the mobility of the black rooks, the second paralyses the mobility of the black king (a white rook at f5 forces the defensive placement …♔c6 – and not …♔e6, which would fail to ♖e5+). We therefore need to throw the correspondingly greater freedom of movement of White's pieces onto the scale. It is apparent to every endgame player that the white king can find profitable employment on the kingside, but what about the white rooks? Shouldn't they occupy the f-file? Well, in that case the backward a-pawn would advance; Black would rid himself of the weak pawn and would in fact obtain a passed pawn. But if one rook were to be used as a blockader at a5, the remaining rook would hardly win any honors on the f-file by itself, right? But play continued **33.♖a5! ♔c6 34.♔g3 ♔b7 35.♖f1 ♔c6 36.♖f5**. First, White brought the rook to f5 and his king to an attacking position. As for the other rook, it feels superb on a5, for it is fully aware of its own elasticity and can at the right moment wander over to the f-file. (But matters will not come to that.) The a5-rook and the black a-rook cancel each other out, so the white f-rook has to reckon only with one counterpart (one rook), and here it proves itself the stronger of the two, partly because it already occupies the f-file and partly because it is supported by the king. But what I particularly wish to emphasize is the readiness of the white a-rook to leave its blockading position and go over to the f-file – just as soon as it is necessary! The fight for the f-file revolves around the conquest of a point of entry for the rook at f6, f7, or f8. **36…♜e7 37.h4 ♜aa7 38.h5 ♜e6 39.♖f8** The entry. (White had planned h5-h6; if Black had played 38…h6, 39.♔h4 and g2-g4-g5 would have been the follow-up.) **39…g6 40.h6 g5 41.♖b8 ♚c7 42.♖bxb5 ♜xh6 43.♖a4 ♜f6 44.♖ba5 ♚c8 45.♔g4 h6 46.♖a2 ♜af7 47.♖xa6** and White won on the 54th move.

In the following, very instructive example, the failure to effect a blockade is punished by free play of the pieces.

Kinch – Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1924

1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘c3 ♞f6 4.♗g5 ♞c6 And now Kinch came up with an interesting innovation. He took the knight with **5.♗xf6 exf6** and made the game a real gambit. **6.♗c4 f5 7.♘ge2** 7.♘h3 is to be preferred. **7…♞a5 8.♗b3 ♞xb3 9.axb3 ♛g5** 9…d5 would fail to 10.♘f4.

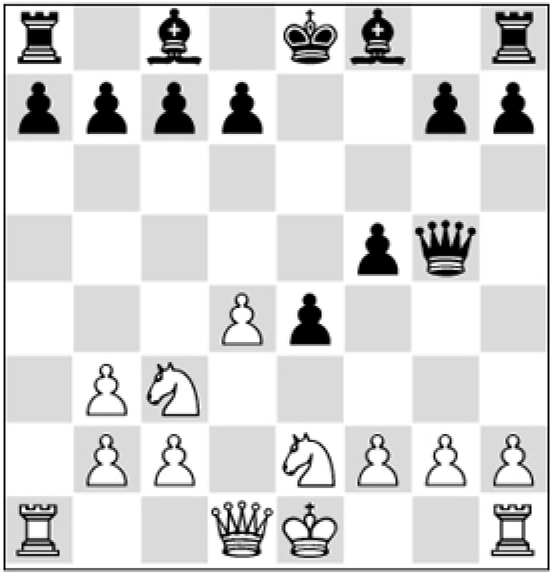


Diagram 10
Kinch-Nimzowitsch (Copenhagen 1924)
Kinch to move

In this position, reached in under ten moves, White could play to block the black pawn majority on the kingside, perhaps with 10.g3 and the establishment of a knight on f4. For instance, 10.g3 ♗e7 11.♘f4 0-0 12.♕d2 d6 13.0-0-0 and h2-h4. Then, despite the extra pawn, where would Black's winning chances be? Perhaps in an attempt to break up the blockade with …g7-g5 (after 10.g3 ♗e7 11.♘f4 ♕h6 12.♕d2 g5)? Hardly, as this would loosen Black's position too much. The blockade just indicated was therefore the right way to equality. The rolling-up maneuver that takes place in the game is likewise good and fine. **10.0-0 ♗e7 11.f3! 0-0! 12.fxe4 fxe4 13.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 14.♘xe4** Winning back the gambit pawn, but this leaves his opponent with the two bishops and a free game. **14…♕e3+ 15.♘f2 d6!** Not 15…d5, which would weaken e5. **16.♘g3 ♗d7 17.♔f1** Probably better was 17.♕d3, although in this case too the bishops would prove very strong. **17…♖e8!** Because White neglected to blockade his opponent in good time, he is justly punished: his opponent's pieces now enjoy great mobility. **18.♖xa7 ♗b5+ 19.c4 ♗a6 20.♘e2 d5 21.♕d3 ♕xd3 22.♘xd3 dxc4 23.bxc4 ♗xc4 24.♘dc1 ♗b4!** Not only stronger than …♗a6 but also in accordance with the requirements of the position, which calls for mobility. **25.♖xb7 ♖f8+** Here Black stumbles; he wins a piece, to be sure, but he is forced to put a portion of his position in chains, which is a sin against the spirit of the blockade! (We have already pointed out that by the logic of the position White should succumb to Black's free piece play, which White's neglect of the blockade was only asking for.) In the spirit of this unrestricted piece play Black should have continued as follows: 25…♗d2! (instead of the 25…♖f8+ played) 26.♔f2 (the only move, as Black threatened mate with 26…♖f8+, etc.) 26…♖f8+, with a decisive king hunt: 27.♔g3 ♗e1+ 28.♔h3 ♗e6+ 29.g4 h5 30.♖b5 (30.♖xc7? hxg4+ 31.♔g2 ♗d5+ 32.♔g1 ♗f2+ 33.♔f1 ♗g3+) 30…♗xg4+ 31.♔g2 ♗xe2 32.♘xe2 ♖f2+ 33.♔g1 ♖xe2, etc.

We return to the game position after White's 25th move (see Diagram 11).

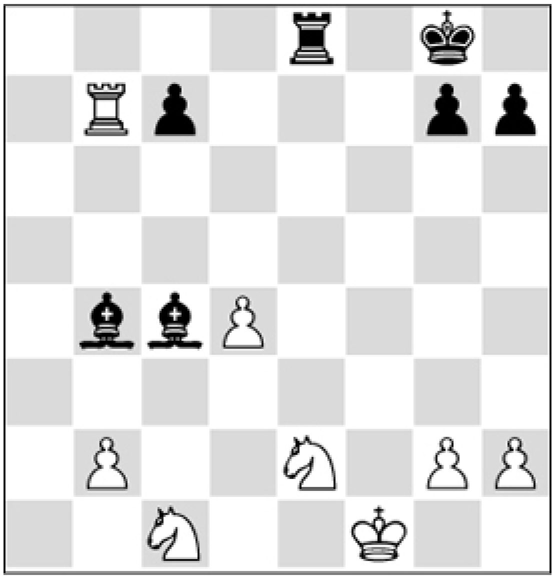


Diagram 11
Position after White’s 25th move

As stated, **25…♜f8+?** was played. **26.♚g1** And now there came, a bit too late, the move **26…♝d2**. The consequence was **27.h3 ♝xc1 28.♞xc1 ♜f1+ 29.♚h2 ♜xc1 30.♜xc7 ♜c2 31.♚g3!** The position is hardly winnable for Black. **31…♝d3 32.♜xc2 ♝xc2 33.♚f4 ♚f7 34.♚e5 ♝b3 35.d5?** The purposeful advance 35.♔d6 most likely would have led to a draw. After the text move White will be starved to death. **35…♚e7 36.g4 ♚d7 37.h4 ♚e7 38.g5 ♚d7 39.h5 ♚e7 40.h6 gxh6 41.gxh6 ♚d7** and White resigned.
The logical connections among the events taking place within the blockade are shown in a most emphatic way in this game. (To give it a name, ‘Crime and Punishment’.)

Before proceeding to the next example we must first clarify the concept of the qualitative majority. A majority, say of three pawns against two, should of course be restrained. A majority in this sense also includes those positions in which a pawn preponderance on a wing is an ideal one. My game vs. Bernstein at Karlsbad 1923 (I had the white pieces) arrived, after **1.♞f3 ♞f6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♞c3 ♝e7 5.e3 0-0 6.a3 a6 7.c5 c6 8.b4 ♞bd7 9.♝b2 ♕c7 10.♕c2 e5 11.0-0-0! e4** (Diagram 12), at a position in which White had an ideal majority on the queenside and Black on the kingside.

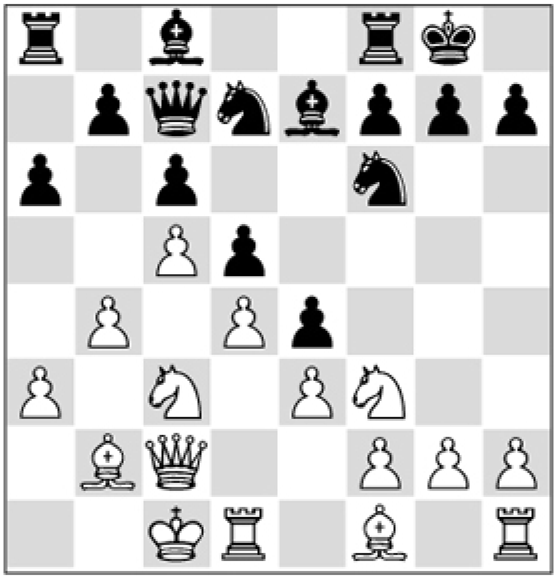


Diagram 12

Why is this so? Because the e4-pawn is ‘more’ than the e3-pawn, and by the same token the c5-pawn is more than the pawn on c6. Given the chance, Black would go over to the attack with an opportune …f7-f5, …g7-g5, and …f5-f4, which would not be less vehement really than a pawn storm involving a real majority. Black would then be threatening to form a wedge (with …f5-f4) and then open a file (with …f4xe3), with a possible later conquest of the besieged e3-pawn (from the side, not from the front). But once we identify a majority, we have to do something about it. Therefore **12.♘h4! ♘b8** (to prevent 13.♘f5) **13.g3! ♘e8 14.♘g2 f5 15.h4** and Black’s kingside, which looked ready to march, is paralysed. After a few more moves the restraint was consolidated into a blockade (with ♘f4)!

Similar, even if more difficult, was the case Nimzowitsch-Olson (Nordic Masters’ Tournament 1924). After **1.f4 c5 2.e4 ♘c6 3.d3 g6** a position was arrived at that, assuming a further build-up with …e7-e6 and …d7-d5, Schmidt has called ‘the battle of the kingside vs. the queenside’. White has in the pawn configuration d3, e4, and f4 a kind of ‘side-center’, while I now restrain my opponent’s mobile queenside (with **4.c4**), as I recognize the pawns on this wing as a majority (of an ideal type). A more detailed rationale for this surprising move can be found in the January (1925) issue of *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten.*

The following example, from a real game, shows how difficult the problems of restraint can be. In his new booklet *Indisch* Dr. Tartakower presents a game that was played between us (Tartakower-Nimzowitsch) at the Copenhagen Masters' Tournament in 1923. After the moves **1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♗g5 ♘c6** Tartakower makes the following remark: 'Typical Nimzowitsch! This is seemingly anti-positional, because in the Queen's Pawn Game the important c-pawn is blocked, and yet in the interest of active piece play this strategy is not to be rejected out of hand.'
To this I should like to add that 3…♘c6! was not played with a view to 'piece play'. The move was played solely to counteract e2-e4, which would open lines and therefore free White's game. Had I played 3…e6 at once, 4.e4 could have followed. Hence, a *strategy of restraint!*
How interesting that this motif could have escaped the experienced and battle-tested Tartakower. Or perhaps it is just this 'experience' that is responsible for the failure of his otherwise 'finely tuned ear'.
After the further moves **4.e3 e6 5.♘f3 ♗e7 6.♗d3 h6! 7.♗h4 b6!** the trend directed against e3-e4 found additional forceful expression: **8.0-0 ♗b7**, for now Black threatens the tactical move …♘e4, with interesting *pêle-mêle* combinations.

We have come to the end of our investigations. We have looked at the problem of restraint from several different angles and have become convinced of how true it is that all strategy is a struggle between mobility on the one hand and on the other an intent to restrain.
The philosophy developed here is completely new and is the result of many years' research; this is particularly true of the basic principle of the duty to blockade. In conclusion, I shall offer to the attentive reader my governing rule:

RULE: **Blockade every pawn that shows the slightest inclination to advance. Blockade every passed pawn, every portion of the center, every quantitative or qualitative majority.**

Do so amicably at first, with gentle measures (such as, e.g., 3…♘c6 in my game with Tartakower at Copenhagen); later, let your chessic anger swell up to a powerful crescendo! The culmination of the process, the ideal of very restraining action is and will always be… blockade!

December 1924
A. Nimzowitsch

Addendum

In acceding to the wish of my esteemed publisher, Mr. B. Kagan, well-known throughout the entire chess world, I am adding a few more games to my treatment of the blockade. This is intended in part to illustrate the blockade and in part to present a few recent examples of my way of playing.
I begin with an older game that I played in 1907 at the masters' tournament at Ostend, and which I number among the most distinctive examples of successful restraint of a qualitative majority.

Game 1

Louis van Vliet
Aron Nimzowitsch
Ostend 1907

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.e3 e6 4.b3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.a3 ♗d6 7.♗b2

White's formation is directed against a potential liberating …e6-e5. Therefore, restraint. No wonder that this restraint later consolidates to a blockade (by a white knight later established at e5). For the purposes of our investigations, a light restraint is to be understood as merely an introductory step – the culmination of the process is a blockade.

7…0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.♘e5! ♗b7 10.♘d2 a6! 11.f4 b5!

Black creates counterplay on the queen's wing, recognizing that his pawns there constitute a qualitative majority.

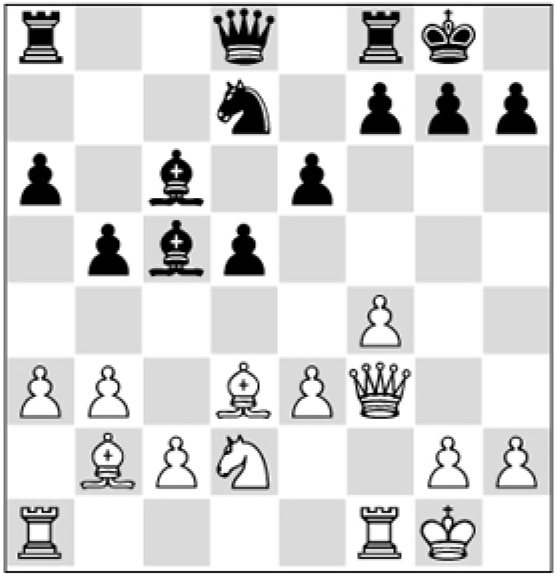
12.dxc5!

An excellent move that was misguided in only one respect: Van Vliet himself didn't understand it. The annotator in the book of the tournament was overtaken by a similar fate: Teichmann assigned the move a question mark. Clearly he considered the incriminating move a surrender of the center. But this would not have been the case at all had White continued correctly.

12…♝xc5 13.♛f3 ♞d7

A better and more consistent move is not apparent. Black wants to get the blockader (e5-knight) off his back so he can mobilize his own center pawns.

14.♞xc6 ♝xc6



15.♛g3

The mistake lies in this and especially the next move. White should try to restrain the black center, which could be done by 15.b4! ♗b6 16.♘b3 followed by either ♗d4 or ♘d4. The blockade thus achieved would not have been easily shaken off by …f7-f6 and …e6-e5, for if …f7-f6, ♕h5 or ♕h3 would have been unpleasant. At the same time, the black b-pawn could have become a target of attack by fixing it with b3-b4.

For example, 15.b4 ♗b6 16.♘b3 ♕e7 17.♘d4 ♗b7 18.a4 (and now 18…♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♕xb4 was out of the question because of the double bishop sacrifice on h7 and g7: 20.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 21.♕h5+ ♔g8 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.♕g5+ ♔h8 24.♖f3), or 17…♗xd4 (instead of 17…♗b7) 18.exd4. In this position, the c2-pawn is backward and pretty much worthless, and the same goes for the bishop on b2, but these weaknesses could only be exposed by maneuvering the knight from d7 via b6 to a4 or c4, and Black, in view of his own vulnerable king position (the white e-file and some freedom to maneuver on the kingside), would hardly have the time and leisure for this. There remains only the establishment of the knight on e4, which, however, after …♗xe4, would result in opposite-colored bishops.

White therefore could have equalized with dxc5 in conjunction with an attempt to restrain the enemy center. After his 16th move White finds himself at a disadvantage, although it must be granted that Black has to play very daringly if he is to make this disadvantage evident.

15…♘f6 16.♜ad1?

With still better success than on the previous move, White could have gone in for the restraining operation mentioned above. Hence 16.b4 ♗b6 17.♘b3, when Black must play carefully if he is to equalize.

16…a5!

Now the a3-pawn constitutes a weakness and White fails to achieve the indicated restraint.

17.♛h3 h6

Black's position can bear this weakening!

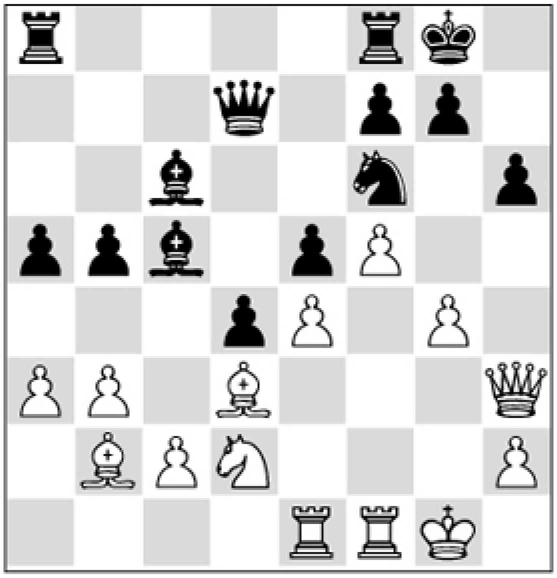
18.g4 d4!!

A deeply conceived move, one that envisages the fixing of the white pawn storm and the flight of the black king. According to my teaching, no other move is even to be considered, since the restraint of the white pawn mass is the most urgent imperative at this hour. How far the various opinions in chess can diverge is shown by the fact that Teichmann speaks of …d5-d4 as a move 'of dubious value'!

19.e4 ♛d7!

In order to answer 20.g5 with 20…e5!.

20.♜de1 e5! 21.f5



White has a qualitative majority on the kingside. The threat is g4-g5, after a preliminary queen move and h2-h4.

21…♗h7

The play that now follows, in the attempt to hold up g4-g5 (after h2-h4) long enough for the king to get away, is an excellent example of the struggle against a qualitative pawn majority.

22.♗f3 ♕e7 23.♕g3 ♖fe8 24.h4 f6 25.♖a1

The weakness at a3 obliges White to make this defensive move.

25…♕b7 26.♖fe1 ♔f7! 27.♖e2 ♖h8 28.♔g2 ♗f8 29.g5 hxg5 30.hxg5 ♗d7

Now the full depth of Black’s defensive plan becomes clear. On 31.gxf6, 31…gxf6 should always be played; f6 is well defended and Black’s king comes to a safe position at d6.

31.gxf6

White strikes out before the black king escapes completely.

31…gxf6 32.♗h4

Not a bad idea – White looks to establish a strong outpost on the g-file.

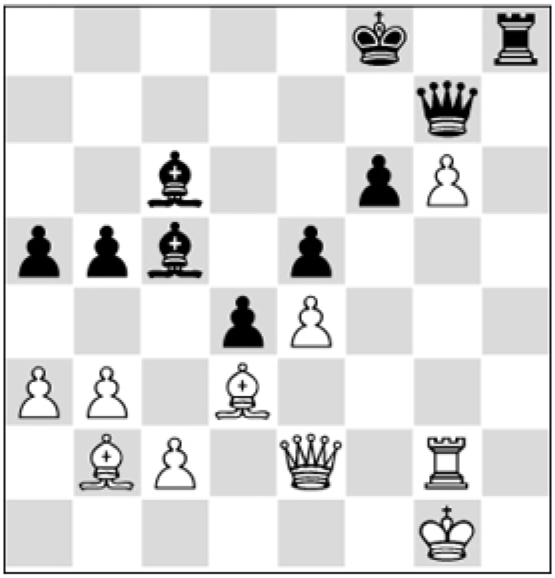
32…♖ag8 33.♗g6 ♖h5 34.♔f2 ♗f8

Now a heated struggle breaks out over the outpost on g6. On the whole this outpost would seem to be quite well established. If, however, he proves unable to maintain it, this will be due to one of the hidden weaknesses in White’s position, namely the fact that the e4-pawn is threatened not only by the bishop on c6 and the queen at b7, but also, rather more – and indirectly – by the bishop on c5, which is all too ready to deliver a discovered check.

35.♜g1 ♜g5 36.♛h4 ♜xg1 37.♚xg1 ♞xg6 38.♛h5 ♚f8 39.fxg6

It looks as though White can hold at g6.

39…♛g7 40.♜g2 ♜h8 41.♛e2



41…♜h4!

Initiating a diversion against the e4-pawn and one that will be of decisive effect, namely for the fate of the g6-pawn, and therefore on the outcome of the game as well.

42.♝c1

At last the bishop, which has been cut off from the game for the past 24 moves, dares to come back out into the light – but just in time to be able to witness the downfall of his game. On 42.♖g4, which Teichmann suggests is necessary for White, 42…♖xg4+ 43.♕xg4 ♗d7! and …♗e8 would follow, when Black must win.

42…♜xe4! 43.♛d2 ♜h4 44.♛xa5 ♛d7

The blockading queen relinquishes her post. When we take into consideration the fact that the blockader is ordinarily a minor piece, we have to grant that the queen has acquitted her unaccustomed duties superbly.

45.g7+ ♚g8

Now His Majesty Himself has taken over the blockade.

46.♗c4+ bxc4 47.♕xc5

To sweep away the blockade with 48.♕f8+.

47…♖h1+

White resigned.

This game vs. Van Vliet, which has remained comparatively unappreciated, I number among my profoundest achievements.

The game that now follows is likewise to be understood as a struggle against a qualitative majority. It was played at the Karlsbad tournament in 1923 and was crowned with the second prize for beauty.

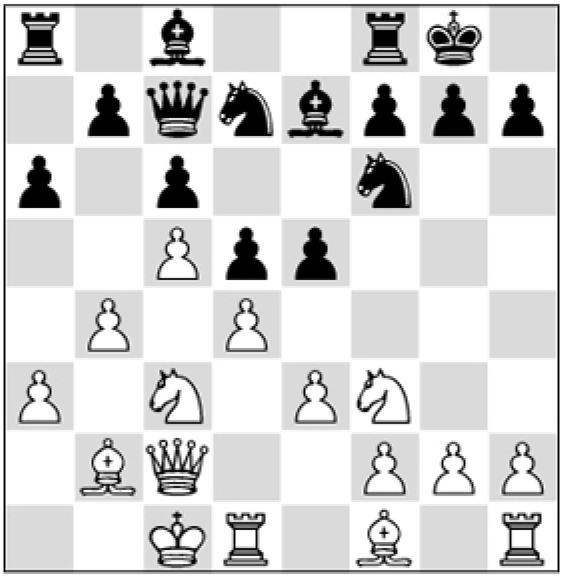
Game 2

Aron Nimzowitsch
Osip Bernstein
Karlsbad 1923

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.e3 0-0 6.a3 a6 7.c5

Forming a pawn chain, which will be completed when the black c-pawn moves forward to c6. The white links in the chain are the pawns at d4 and c5, with the black ones at d5 and c6. The white plan of attack in the realm of the pawn chain is to be seen in b2-b4, a3-a4, b4-b5, bxc6, after which …bxc6 is forced. In other words, the c6-pawn forms the base of the black pawn chain, and this base will be subject to attack from the flank and from an enveloping movement from the open b-file. (The attack from the flank would be carried out by ♖b6, while the enveloping attack would consist of ♖b7-c7xc6.) We have already discussed the opening moves in the theoretical portion of this article.

7…c6 8.b4 ♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♕c7 10.♕c2 e5 11.0-0-0!



Up to now, the central push in similar positions has been seen as a refutation of the pincer movement originating from the flank. A completely unfounded notion! The …e6-e5 advance is simply a healthy reaction to c4-c5, which, provided White’s center has any power of resistance, equalizes the game, but nothing more than that.

11…e4

The other theoretically conceivable attempt to further strengthen the attack on d4 lay in the exchange …exd4 followed by play down the e-file with …♖e8 and the subsequent establishment of an outpost on e4. Here, however, such an attempt is not practicable, since the e-file would be of use only to White by virtue of his better development. So there is nothing left for Black but to relinquish d4 as inviolable and transfer his attack from d4 to the new base of the pawn chain at e3 with …e5-e4. White now has the task of impeding the flow of moves …f7-f5-f4xe3, which would expose e3 from the side.

12.♘h4! ♘b8

To prevent ♘f5.

13.g3 ♘e8 14.♘g2 f5 15.h4

The restraint has been carried out in classic style with the simplest of means. Of course 12.♘h4 could appear as ‘baroque’ or ‘bizarre’, but this move merely uses the essential component of a classic restraint operation, so our esteemed reader will understand when all I have for such criticism, put forward by a few observers, is a pitying smile.

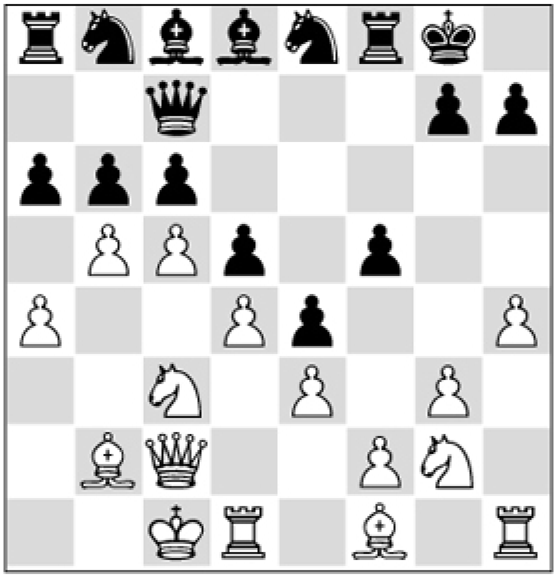
15…♝d8 16.a4

More circumspect was, first, 16.♗e2 and ♔d2. After completing his development in this way White could conduct the attack all the way to victory without any greater effort.

16…b6!

Very well played. In most cases, this counter-advance by the minority tends to be to the advantage of the attacking side, but here the presence of the white majesty compromises the majority in a certain sense; hence the …b7-b6 advance is amply motivated.

17.b5



17…♞f6 18.♞f4!

The blockader!

18…axb5 19.axb5 ♛f7 20.♝e2 ♝c7 21.cxb6 ♝xf4

After 21…♗xb6 Black would have ended up with palpable weaknesses; e.g., 22.♔d2, when White occupies the a-file and continues with threats over the long term against the base of the pawn chain at d5 (after the disappearance of the protecting c6-pawn).

22.gxf4

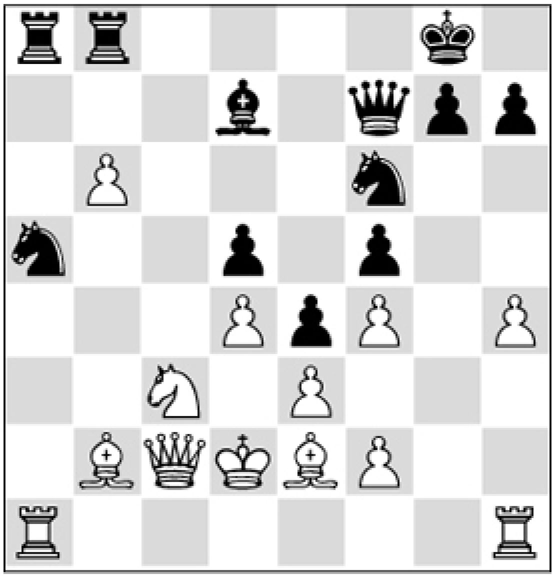
Now the restraint of the black pawn mass on the kingside is absolute.

22…♝d7 23.♚d2 cxb5 24.♜a1!

White enforces positional advantages on the queenside.

24…♞c6 25.♝xb5 ♞a5! 26.♝e2 ♜fb8

Black has defended himself splendidly and now prepares to equalize the game with …♖xb6.

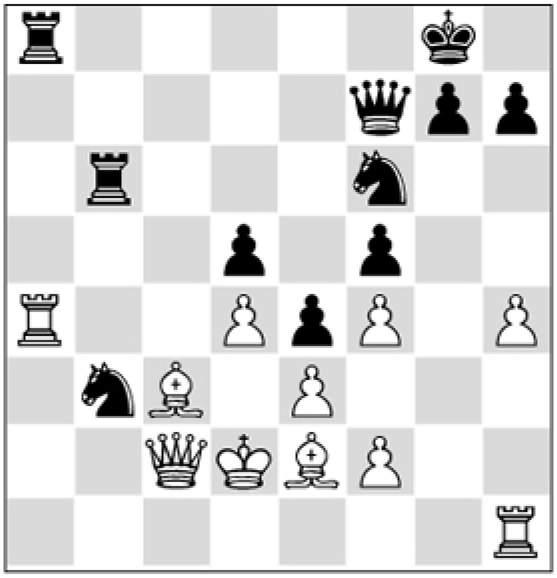


27.♞a4

An exceedingly elegant combination. White could also have considered 27.♖a3; e.g., 27…♖xb6 28.♖ha1 ♘c4+ 29.♗xc4 ♖xa3 30.♖xa3 (30.♗xd5 would simplify too much and lead only to a draw due to the bishops of opposite color) 30…dxc4 31.♖a8+, although after 31…♗e8 32.♗a3 ♖b3 White would have less than nothing. What the text move has going for it, besides specific, combinational grounds, is the positional fact that White has to make it as difficult as possible for his opponent to win back the sacrificed material without, however, being overly intent on holding on to it.

27…♝xa4 28.♜xa4 ♜xb6 29.♝c3 ♞b3+

Just what I was hoping for! But even after the more correct 29…♘c4+ 30.♗xc4 ♖xa4 31.♕xa4! dxc4 32.♕a8+ ♕e8 33.♕xe8+ ♘xe8 34.♖a1 White would be better, although Black could then erect a firm blockade wall on d5.



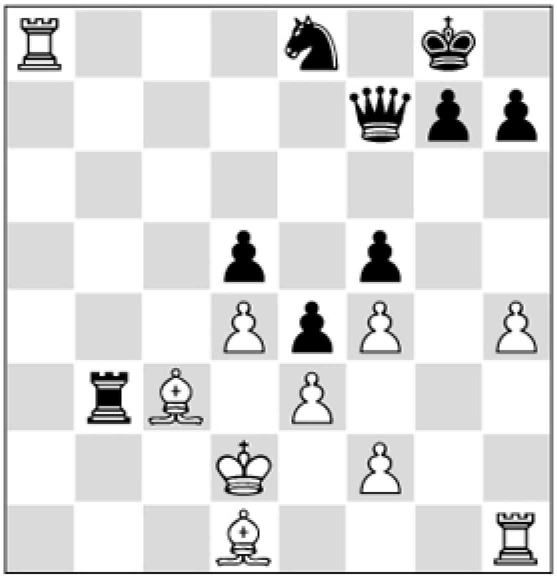
30.♕xb3!

This sacrifice, prepared by 27.♘a4, is imbued with the modern spirit in the best sense of the word (cf. the note to Black’s 31st move).

30…♖xb3 31.♖xa8+ ♘e8

And now one might expect a rapid intervention by the rooks: all the major pieces against the small-caliber knight, still pinned to e8. At that time they called this ‘elegant play’! But this brutal kind of chess is not in keeping with my nature, and in any case it would be a gross blunder; e.g., 32.♖ha1? ♕c7! 33.♖xe8+ ♔f7, when White has burnt himself out and now sheds tears of remorse. No, the rook is in no hurry to ‘intervene’ – on the contrary, with a weary gesture, as if somewhat bored, he relegates himself to exile in the background.

32.♗d1!!



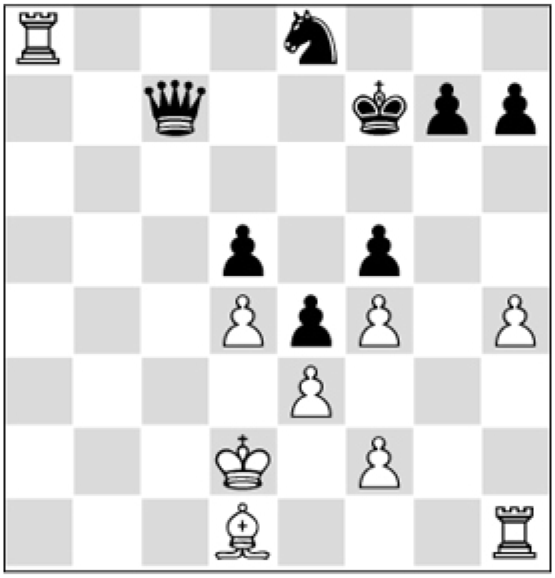
The point! White has no fear at all of the reply 32…♖b1.

32…♜xc3!

Again the gifted American master hits upon the strongest move. On 32…♖b1, 33.♗a4 ♖xh1 34.♗xe8! would have followed (about a full tempo stronger than 34.♖xe8+), while 32…♖b6 would be inadequate because of 33.♗a4 ♖e6 34.♖b1 (only now does the rook make its appearance!) 34…♕g6! 35.♖bb8 ♕g2 36.♗xe8 ♕xf2+ 37.♔c1, when the king escapes to safety and White wins.

Doesn’t the ‘late’ intervention of the main actor, the h1-rook, remind us a bit of the way a ‘hero’ of a drama is usually ‘introduced’? First, a maidservant appears and tells a story, then two other ‘characters’ appear on the stage and make us curious about the ‘hero’; then finally the hero himself appears in person and becomes the center of events.

33.♚xc3 ♛c7+ 34.♚d2 ♚f7



Now a position has been reached that can be won only through attacking play in the classical style. The old picture: first, achieve a won game by the modern practice of accumulating positional advantages, then convert these advantages with old-fashioned classical chess!

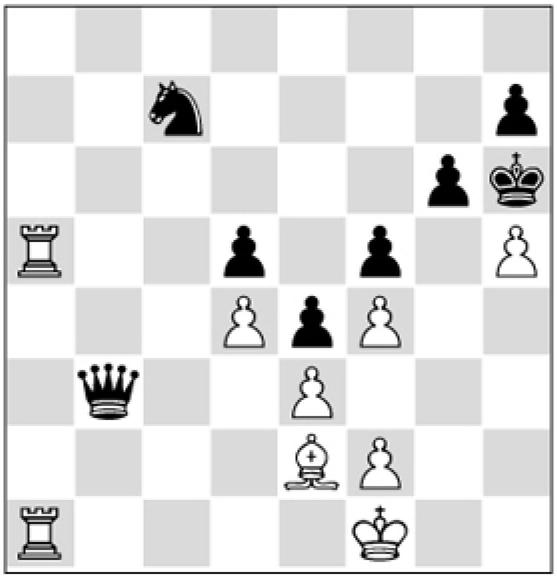
35.♗h5+! g6 36.♖ha1!

Classical is the watchword, so the rook becomes boisterous.

36…♕b6 37.♗e2 ♔g7 38.♔e1 ♘c7 39.♖8a5 ♔h6 40.♔f1!

What a difference! In the first (modern) part of the game White thought about everything but the safety of his king. But now this motif has become the driving force behind all his activity!

40…♕b3 41.h5!



Now White’s plan is clear. After hxg6 hxg6 the black king will be affectionately embraced from the h-file and on the 7th rank. Should the queen wish to disturb this plan, e.g., with …♕b2 after White’s ♔g2, the doubled rooks should have an important word to say about this (♖5a2).

41…♘e8

The reserves are mobilized.

42.♖a6 ♕b2 43.hxg6 hxg6 44.♖6a2!

See the note to White’s 41st move.

44…♕b7 45.♖a7 ♕b2 46.♔g2

The king declines the help of the rooks – he doesn’t need them anymore.

46…♘f6 47.♖h1+ ♘h5 48.♗xh5 gxh5

Now Black even has a passed pawn.

49.♖ha1!

The theme of The Return! Black resigned.

As a further example, here is a less well-known game against the outstanding Danish master Möller, played at the master’s tournament at Copenhagen in 1923.

Game 3

Aron Nimzowitsch

Jorgen Möller

Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d6

As becomes evident from my article in the January issue of *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten*, this move, analysed by me and by Krause, is completely playable.

4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗f4 h6 6.h4 ♘g4

Threatening …e7-e5, with complete freedom.

7.d5 ♘ce5 8.♗xe5

The immediate e2-e4 was better.

8…dxe5 9.e4 e6! 10.♘h2

Something had to be done to counter 10…♗c5.

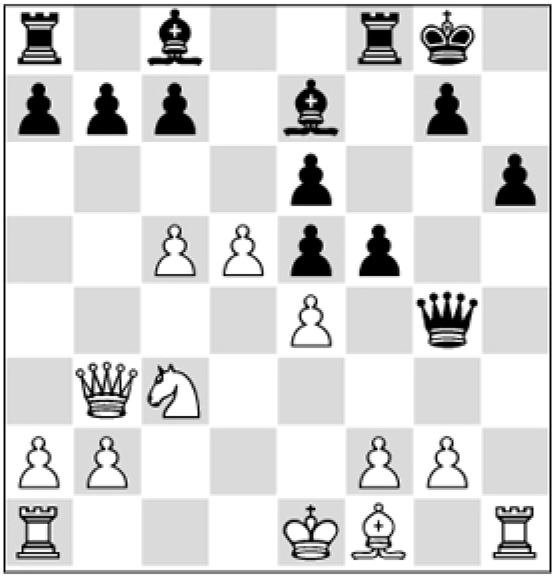
10…♕xh4 11.♘xg4!

A sound sacrifice of the exchange. On 11…♕xh1, 12.♘xe5 would follow, with a very strong attack.

11…♕xg4 12.♕b3 ♗e7 13.c5

The mobile superiority!

13…0-0



14.dxe6

Ordinarily, one has to think twice before deciding to trade in a ‘mobile majority’ for a ‘blockaded passed pawn’, for that amounts to giving up one’s dreams for the sake perhaps of an old-age pension. If, however, one’s opponent needs a great number of pieces to blockade the pawn, and if there is a chance of re-awakening ‘Sleeping Beauty’ (the passed pawn), the bold shot may be justified – and so it is here.

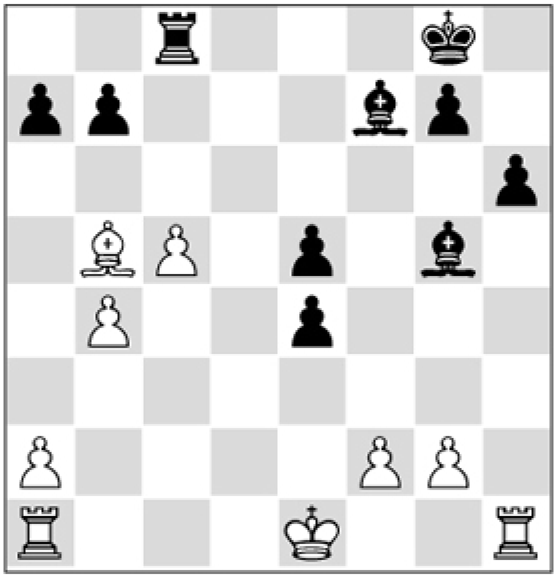
14…fxe4 15.♞d5 ♛g5 16.♛e3

Better seems 16.♘xc7 ♖b8 17.♗c4.

16…♝xe6!

An excellent sacrifice of the exchange by which Black procures the two bishops and various counter-chances.

17.♛xg5 ♝xg5 18.♞xc7 ♝f7 19.♞xa8 ♜xa8 20.♝b5 ♜c8 21.b4



White has the majority on the queenside, but he also has difficulties in developing his king’s rook, for castling in the endgame phase would be bad. But now things come to life because Black seeks to stop the majority once and for all.

21…b6 22.♝d7! ♜c7 23.c6 b5 24.♜h3 e3 25.a4

25…♗d5 was threatened; e.g., 25.fxe3? ♗d5 26.♖c1 ♗xg2.

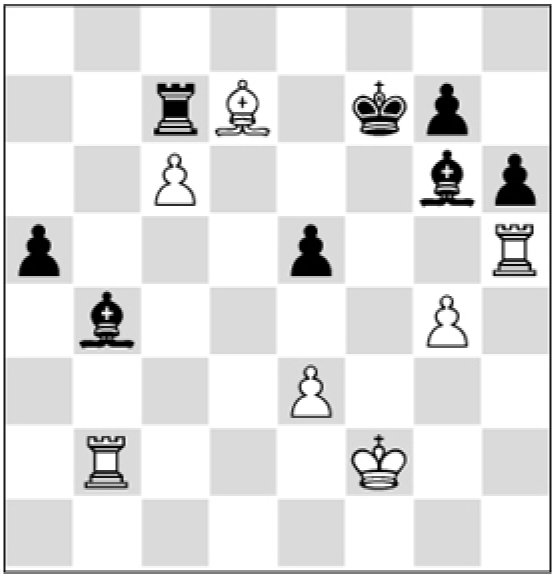
25…bxa4 26.♜xa4 ♝c4 27.fxe3 ♝b5 28.♜a2 ♝e7! 29.♜c2

The c-pawn is the more valuable of the two, so the b-pawn has to bite the dust.

29…♗xb4+ 30.♔f2 ♗d3 31.♖b2 a5

The situation has clarified. White still has his blockaded passed pawn and apparently has no opportunity to dislodge the blockader, while the black passed pawn, as Lasker puts it, is imbued with ‘threatening’ mobility.

32.♖h5 ♔f7 33.g4 ♗g6



34.♖xe5!

A deep combination: White offers the exchange because his king can penetrate into the center, and so in combination with the e-pawn and his own rook can work to dissolve the blockade.

34…♗c3 35.♖bb5 ♗xe5 36.♖xe5 a4 37.♔f3 ♗c2 38.e4 ♗b3 39.♖b5

Unveiling the assault on the ‘strong-rook’ blockader, doing so from all sides. The ‘roles’ for each piece are assigned as follows: the rook at b5 will attack the ‘unfortunate’ black rook with ♖b7. Black’s king will of course hurry to its aid and protect the attacked rook on c7 from d6; then the check with the e-pawn (e4-e5+) will be decisive. But if the black king takes up a more modest position at d8, the white king will penetrate via f4 and e5 to d6, when the blockader is dead…

39…♔e7 40.♖b7 ♔d8 41.♖b8+ ♔e7 42.♔f4 ♖xd7

White threatened 43.♔e5 and ♖b7. If after ♖b7, …♔d8, then ♔d6.

43.♖b7! ♗e6 44.cxd7 ♗xd7 45.♔e5

After a successful assault, a soothing rest!

45…♚e8 46.♚d6 ♝xg4 47.♜xg7 h5 48.e5 a3 49.e6

The three assailants have won high honors, and the little pawn is about to become a high dignitary. But Black did not care to witness these developments and accordingly resigned the game.

A fine game, and very instructive in its harmoniously conducted struggle against the blockader on c7.

Also in the Copenhagen Masters’ Tournament of 1923 I played a game against Sämisch, in which the fate of the passed pawn I had established may be of interest for the purposes of this article. This game is also characteristic of my style, so I hope it will be of interest to my benevolent reader.

Game 4

Aron Nimzowitsch
Friedrich Sämisch
Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 b6

This opening, whose idea is to renounce the establishment of a materially tangible center and therefore to be satisfied with a kind of supremacy (therefore of an ideal influence), I discovered and thoroughly analysed in 1911-12. At the St. Petersburg Masters’ Tournament of 1913 I employed my innovation for the first time, vs. Gregory. This game with Gregory must be regarded as the stem game, and I must be regarded as the discoverer of the opening 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 without a subsequent …d7-d5.

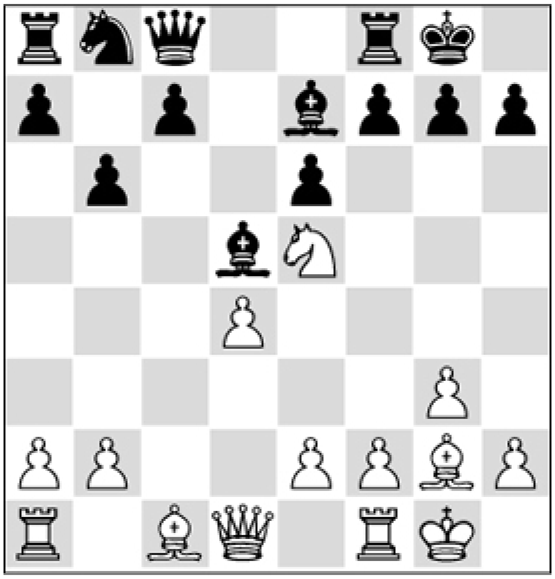
4.g3

The antidote recommended by Rubinstein at that time – which, however, as the game vs. Sämisch, given later (Game 9), will show, is fairly innocuous.

4…♝b7 5.♝g2 ♝e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♞c3 d5 8.♞e5 ♛c8

Not good. Much better, as played in the game cited, is my move 8…c6.

9.cxd5 ♞xd5 10.♞xd5! ♝xd5



11.e4

This move cannot be bad, and yet I think 11.♗xd5 exd5 12.♗e3 deserves preference. On 12…♕e6 (to protect d5 and therefore to enable …c7-c5), 13.♘d3 ♘d7 14.♖c1 would follow, when Black is weak along the c-file and will painfully lament the absence of his queen's bishop, while the white king can rather get along without the bishop on g2. Yet, after 14…♗d6, matters would not be clear.

11…♝b7 12.♛a4

This seems somewhat artificial. Many would have preferred 12.♗e3.

12…c5 13.d5

The birth of the passed pawn.

13…b5

Which Black accepts without any sign of concern. On the contrary, he becomes positively truculent!

14.♛b3

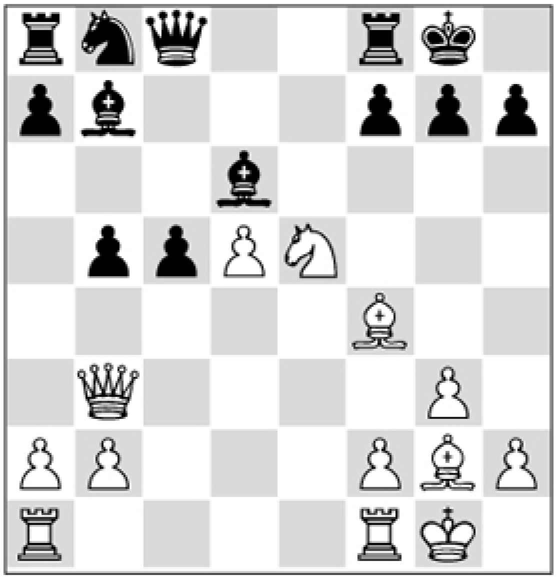
The obvious course here would be to sacrifice the exchange: 14.♕xb5 ♗a6 15.♕b3 ♗xf1 16.♔xf1; but after 16…♗f6 17.♘c4 exd5 18.exd5 ♘d7, White's advantage would be not quite convincing. Is it really necessary to celebrate the birth of a passed pawn in such a violent and crude way?

14…exd5 15.exd5 ♝d6

The blockader reports for duty.

16.♝f4!

His counterpart, who makes his appearance by offering a sacrifice.



16…♛c7

On 16…g5 the intended follow-up was 17.♘xf7 ♗xf4 18.♘h6+ ♔g7 19.gxf4 ♔xh6 20.fxg5+. In fact, Black would have found himself in a real quandary, for if after 20.fxg5+ he takes the proffered pawn he would find himself in a mating net after White’s ♔h1 and ♖g1. But if instead he were to play 20…♔g7, White would decide the game with 21.♕c3+ ♔g8 22.♗h3 followed by ♗e6, or, instead of 22.♗h3, he would win by positional means with 22.♖e1 and f2-f4. The pawn mass in conjunction with the e-file (the point e6) would be of decisive importance.

17.♞d3!

Again a combinative move. The fork 17…c4 would lead to nothing after 18.♗xd6 ♕xd6 19.♕xb5 ♗a6 20.♕c5!.

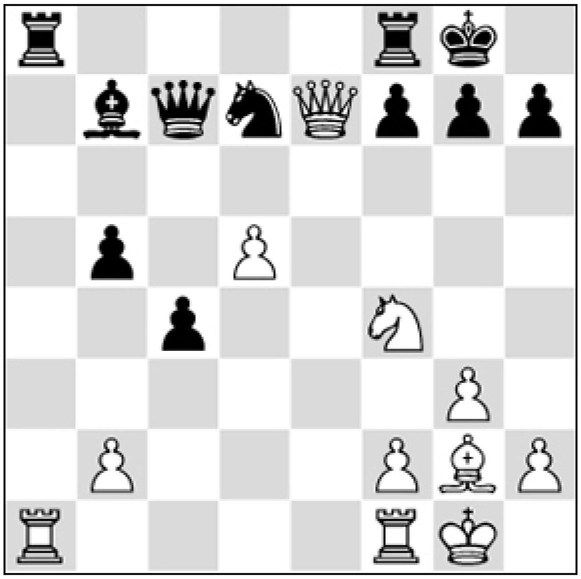
17…a6 18.a4!!

One of the most difficult moves! Not because of the underlying combination 18…c4 19.♕a3!!, which he was able to play in the game, but much more because the opening of the a-file serves a positional purpose that is still very well hidden.

18…c4 19.♛a3! ♝xf4 20.♞xf4

By means of quite unusual combinations I have succeeded in eliminating the blockader at d6. The next blockader is the knight at d7, which proves to be a more tenacious fellow.

20…♘d7 21.axb5 axb5 22.♕e7!



The position now reached explains why White sought the opening of the a-file; everything was played single-mindedly for the sake of the passed pawn. The important thing is that the queen would like to be established on e7 prior to d5-d6. But with the a-file closed she could not remain there for long, since …♖e8 would chase her away instantly. But the situation is quite different with an open a-file. On 22…♖ae8, 23.♕b4 would follow, when White, through ♖a5 (after …♕b6) gets play down the a-file. Hence Black must take other measures.

22…♕d8 23.d6 ♗xg2 24.♔xg2 ♘f6 25.♖fd1

The dear child must be protected and supported.

25…♖xa1 26.♖xa1 ♕xe7 27.dxe7

Now he has advanced – White’s efforts have been rewarded.

27…♖e8 28.♖a7

Now White is clearly better.

28…g5 29.♘e2 ♘d5 30.♘d4 ♘xe7

Death brings grief. Here, however, there are numerous rays of light to be seen, for after

31.♘xb5

White is superior because of his possession of the 7th rank and the exposed pawn on c4.

31…♘c6 32.♘d6

A very fine sacrifice! Not in terms of material, of course, but rather in White’s sacrifice of his advantage on the 7th rank.

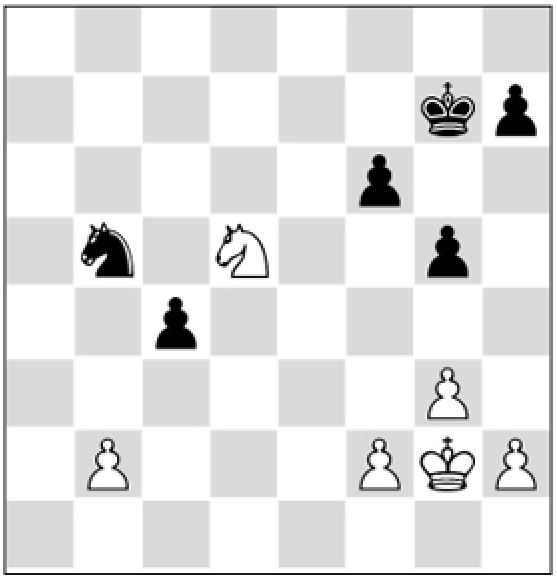
32…♘xa7 33.♘xe8

The knight ending is favorable for White.

33…♘b5 34.♘f6+ ♔g7 35.♘d5

The knight does not go to e4, as this square is to be reserved for the king.

35…f6



36.♔f3 ♔f7 37.♘c3 ♘d4+ 38.♔e4 ♘b3 39.♔d5

The position of the white king is decisive.

39…♘d2 40.h3 f5 41.♘d1 ♔f6 42.♘e3 ♘e4 43.♘xc4 ♘xf2 44.b4

This passed pawn is being brilliantly supported by the knight and king; it will win the race.

44…♔e7

The ‘blockade dagger’ hidden in the robe!

45.b5 ♔d7 46.b6 ♘e4 47.♘e5+ ♔c8 48.♔c6 ♘f6 49.♘d3!

On its way to c5.

49…♘d7 50.b7+ ♔d8

An unsuccessful blockading try. Now the d7-knight is the only piece with an effect on b8.

51.♔d6 ♘b8 52.♘b4! ♘d7 53.♘c6+ ♔e8 54.♔c7

And Black resigned, as ♘e5 will be fatal.

The first passed pawn, after a career rich in dramatic conflicts – think of the various sacrificial offers enabling it to advance to d6, and further of the movement of the d-pawn to e7 through extraordinary efforts (the seemingly unmotivated opening of the a-file) – proceeds only to fall by the murderer’s hand. But from its ashes a new passed pawn arose, on the b-file, that advanced with irresistible energy.

To conclude the section on the ‘passed pawn’, I offer my game vs. Spielmann from the Stockholm tournament, 1920. (Results: I. Bogoljubow, 12½; II. Nimzowitsch, 12; III. Olson, 8; IV. Spielmann, 6½; followed by Jacobson, Nyholm, and Svanberg.) The game represents a difficult positional struggle for small advantages, and only later is the passed pawn created. The way in which Spielmann’s passed pawn is stopped in its apparently irresistible victorious march makes this game an instructive example for our article.

Game 5

Aron Nimzowitsch
Rudolf Spielmann
Stockholm 1920

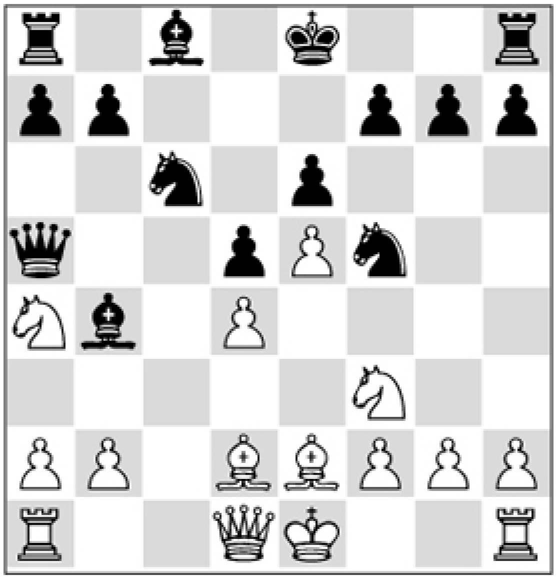
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.c3 ♕b6 6.♗e2 cxd4

If this early realignment of the white center (the c3-pawn disappearing along with the c5-pawn) is the best move, then the black position must be characterized as weak. But 6…♗d7 is most likely playable.

7.cxd4 ♘h6 8.♘c3 ♘f5 9.♘a4

Combinational. Good enough is 9.♗b5.

9…♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♗b4



11.♗c3

Typical of this kind of attack is the fact that even 11.♘c3 would have given the pawn sufficient protection; e.g., 11…♘cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.a3 ♘xe2 14.axb4 ♘xc3 15.♗xc3 (or 15.♖xa5), with a draw in view of the opposite-colored bishops in conjunction with the establishment of a piece on d4.

11…♗d7

Or 11…♗xc3+! 12.♘xc3 ♕b6 (12…♕b4? 13.a3!) 13.♗b5 0-0 14.♗xc6 ♕xb2 15.♘a4 ♕b4+ 16.♕d2, with the occupation of c5 and equality (the point c5 in this position is of at least equal value to the pawn).

12.a3 ♗xc3+ 13.♘xc3 h5 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♕d2 ♕d8

To follow up with …g7-g5.

16.h3! ♘a5

Now, 16…g5 fails to 17.g4; e.g., 17…hxg4 18.hxg4 ♘h4 19.♘xh4 ♖xh4 20.♔g2 and 21.♖h1, with an edge for White.

17.♖ad1 ♕b6 18.♖fe1

Notice how White systematically over-protects the points d4 and e5, corresponding to the rule I formulated, that ‘important points should be over-protected’.

18…♘c4 19.♗xc4 ♖xc4 20.♘e2

To trade off the strong f5-knight with ♘g3.

20…♝a4 21.♖c1 ♝b3 22.♖xc4 ♝xc4 23.♘g3 ♘e7 24.h4! ♘g6 25.♘f1

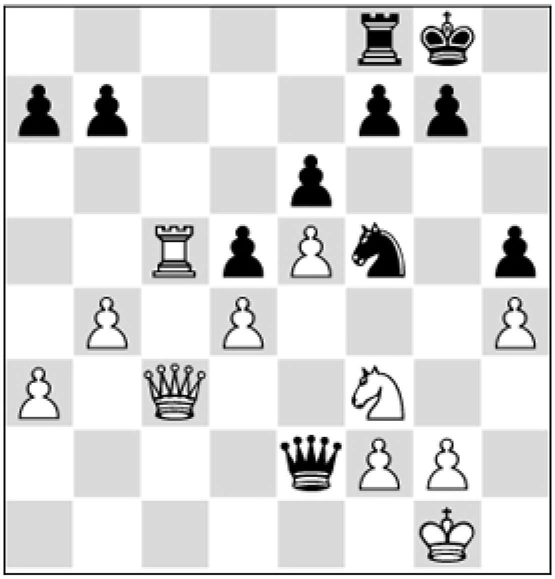
Planning 26.♘e3, going after the scrawny bishop at c4.

25…♝xf1 26.♖xf1 ♘e7 27.♖c1 0-0

Now Spielmann decides to castle nevertheless, since the knight at f5 will cover everything. White, meanwhile, as a result of all his maneuvers, has taken over the c-file.

28.b4 ♘f5 29.♖c5 ♕a6 30.♕c3 ♕e2

With great skill Spielmann has succeeded in creating a counter-chance by his penetration into the white position, exploiting the fact that f2 and later a3 will be in need of protection.



31.♕c2!!

After lengthy deliberation White decided on the pawn sacrifice that is involved with this move.

31…♘xd4! 32.♕xe2

Wrong would be 32.♘xd4: 32…♕e1+ 33.♔h2 ♕xe5+.

32…♘xe2+ 33.♔f1 ♘f4

Black is a passed pawn ahead.

34.♖c7 b5

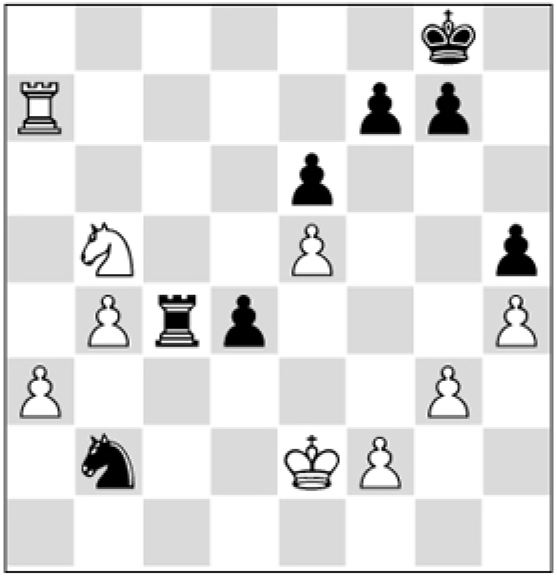
34…b6 was perhaps more circumspect.

35.g3 ♘d3 36.♔e2 ♘b2 37.♖xa7

A move that required deep foresight. Black gets the c-file, but the white king is so ‘restraint-capable’ that the apparently very well supported d-pawn cannot progress very far.

37…♖c8 38.♘d4 ♖c4 39.♘xb5 d4

On 39…♖c2+, 40.♔f1 ♘d3, 41.f4 would follow.



40.♖c7 d3+ 41.♔e3

Not to d2 because of 41…♖e4.

41…♖g4 42.♖c1 g5

Spielmann doesn’t let up!

43.♘d6

Less good would be 43.♖b1 because of 43…♘c4+ 44.♔xd3 ♘xe5+ 45.♔e2 gxh4 46.gxh4 ♖xh4.

43…gxh4 44.gxh4 ♖xh4 45.♖b1

An elegant backward movement on the part of the rook, (♖a7-c7-c1-b1). This is especially so when we consider that the obligatory drop of poison is definitely present, for the rook on b1 arouses in the b-pawn a… lust to wander.

45…♖h3+ 46.♔d2

The king has taken a circuitous route – one might say a most strenuous circuitous route – to reach the blockade position.

46…♘a4 47.b5 ♘b6 48.♖b4

48.a4? ♘xa4 49.b6 ♘xb6 50.♖xb6 ♖f3!.

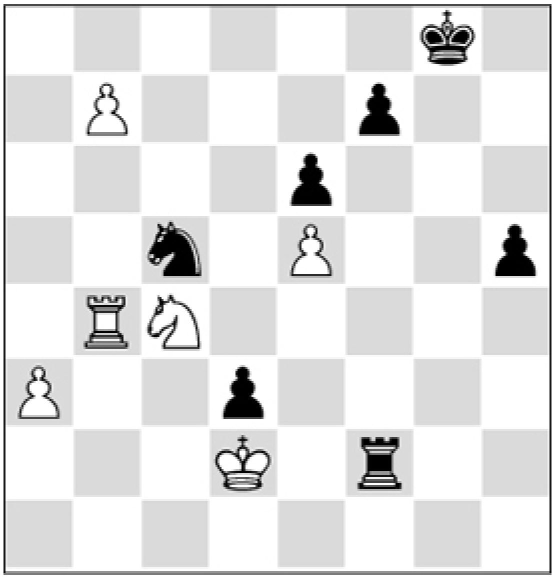
48…♜f3 49.♞c4

Death to the blockader!

49…♞d7

After 49…♘xc4+ 50.♖xc4 ♖xf2+ 51.♔xd3 ♖f3+ 52.♔c2 ♖xa3 the b-pawn would press forward inexorably; e.g., 53.♖c8+ ♔g7 54.b6 ♖a2+ 55.♔c3 ♖a3+ 56.♔c4 ♖a4+ 57.♔b5 and wins.

50.b6 ♞c5 51.b7 ♜xf2+



Note the subtlety with which Black makes use of his knight (which is as good as dead) right down to its last breath. Now comes an exciting dance around the d3-pawn.

52.♚e3 ♜e2+ 53.♚d4 ♞xb7 54.♚xd3!

The point. Even so, the win is still very difficult, as the h-pawn suddenly becomes dangerous.

54…♜g2 55.♜xb7 h4 56.♞e3 ♜g5 57.♚d4 h3 58.♜b2 ♜h5 59.♜h2 f6 60.♞c4 ♚f7 61.a4

Here the game was broken off and Spielmann resigned without resuming the struggle, for after 61…♔g6 62.a5 fxe5+ 63.♔c5 ♔f5 64.a6 ♖h7 65.♔b6 ♔g4 the knight arrives just in time with 66.♘e3+ and 67.♘f1 to give effective support to the blockader on h2. A most valuable game.

The following pair of games are given to elucidate the struggle against a majority in the center. First, a more recent game that I played against Brinckmann in a match I won by 4 to 0.

Game 6

Aron Nimzowitsch
Alfred Brinckmann
Kolding 1923

1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.e3 ♞f6 5.♞c3 ♞c6

The normal position in the Queen’s Gambit, which I like to play.

6.♝e2 ♝d6

Purists, that is to say straight-line pseudo-classicists, will feel that 6.♗e2 is a deviation from the straight path (6.♗d3!). But such is not the case, for ♗e2 is better suited than ♗d3 to many pawn configurations that may arise after a later pawn exchange, e.g., in the case of an isolated d5-pawn.

7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 cxd4

Here too the purist will not be able to conceal his discontent that 8…b6 would be better. Yet, after 9.♗b2 ♗b7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.dxc5 bxc5 the hanging pawns would not be to everyone’s taste, although Tarrasch did in fact achieve, let us say, a brilliant victory with it.

9.exd4 ♞e4

Not at all bad; the absence of the bishop from d3 is taken advantage of all the same.

10.♝b2 ♞xc3 11.♝xc3 ♞e7

Here, however, 11…b6 was better.

12.c5 ♝c7 13.b4

The queenside majority that Black would like to counter with his own majority in the center.

13…♞g6 14.♜e1

This is what we call a fine tournament move, unremarkable and yet multi-faceted, directed against …e6-e5 and conserving the bishop (with ♗f1) against …♘h4.

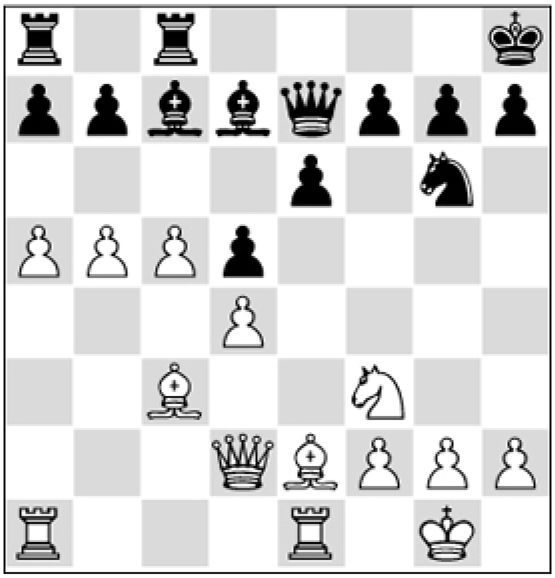
14…♝d7 15.b5 ♛e7 16.♛d2!

Parrying the threat …e6-e5; e.g., 16…e5? 17.dxe5 ♕xc5 18.♗b4.

16…♖fc8 17.a4 ♔h8

On 17…e5, the game would continue 18.dxe5 ♕xc5 19.♗d4 (blockade), with the better game for White.

18.a5



18…f6

From this point on, …e6-e5 is a continual threat.

19.a6 b6 20.c6 ♗e8

White has converted his mobile pawn majority into a protected passed pawn. This pawn, however, has been stopped and for the time being White has no real point of attack in the enemy camp. Did the conversion of the majority perhaps occur at too quick a pace?

21.♗f1 ♗f7 22.h4 ♗d6 23.g3 ♕c7 24.♗h3 ♖e8 25.♖e3!

White has forestalled the breakthrough in a subtle, combinational way. If now 25…e5, then 26.h5 ♘f8 27.dxe5 fxe5 28.♖ae1 d4 29.♘xd4 exd4 30.♕xd4 and wins.

25…♘f8 26.♖ae1 ♖e7 27.♗b4! ♖ae8 28.♕c3!

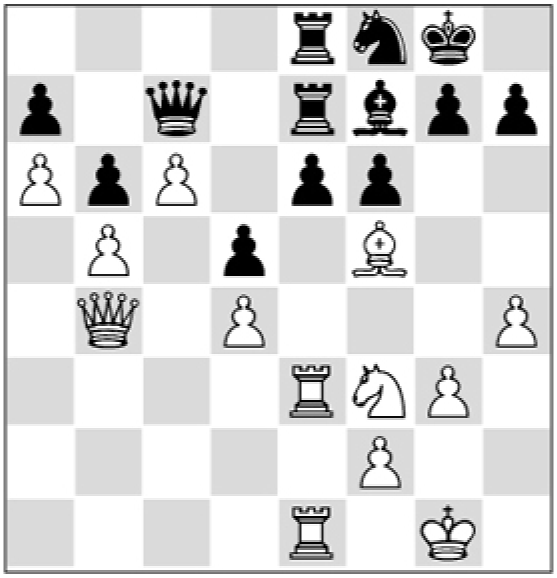
To play ♕a3, forcing …♗xb4 and thereby taking over the diagonal a3-e7.

28…♗xb4 29.♕xb4 ♔g8

29…e5 was forbidden because of the threat emanating from the b4-f8 diagonal; e.g., 29…e5 30.dxe5 fxe5 31.♘xe5 ♖xe5 32.♖xe5 ♖xe5

33.♕xf8+.

30.♗f5



30…♗g6

Black has defended himself well, but here he should have played 30…e5, which probably would have led to equality.

31.♗xg6 ♘xg6 32.h5 ♘f8 33.♘h4!

Now 33…e5 would be answered by 34.♘f5.

33…♚f7 34.♚g2

Little moves of this kind are characteristic of the master player. White is counting on a potential opening of the h-file and wants to be ready to contest it (♖h1).

34…g6

Correct; this move was in the air.

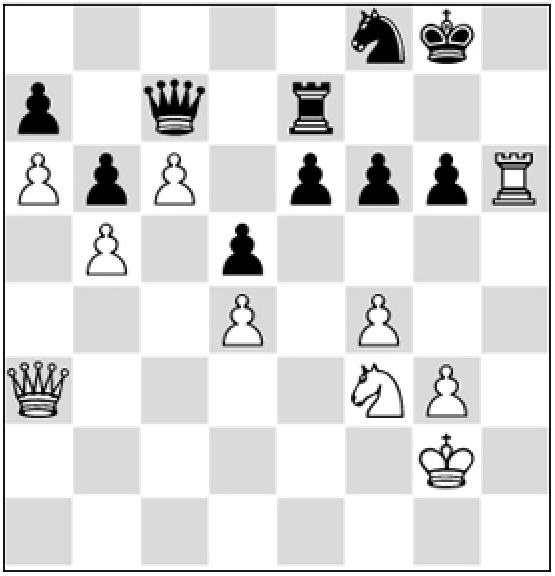
35.hxg6+ hxg6 36.f4

Now, for the first time, it appears that Black's pawn majority (in the center) is crippled.

36…♕d8 37.♘f3 ♕c7 38.♖h1 ♚g8 39.♖ee1 ♖h7 40.♖xh7 ♘xh7 41.♖h1 ♘f8 42.♖h6!

To induce …♔g7, which would make Black's planned counter-positioning …♖e7-h7 more difficult; e.g., 42…♔g7 43.♖h2 with a possible doubling on the h-file, perhaps after a preparatory ♕d2 and g3-g4-g5.

42…♜e7 43.♛a3



The path to victory is a very interesting one. It culminates in the knight sacrifice on… b6!! That is to say, as follows: White plays his queen to h1 by way of c1. Before this, however, he brings the g-pawn to g5, forcing the creation of a hole on e5. After that White can force the exchange of either the rooks or the queens; e.g., 43.♕a3 ♕d8 44.♕c1 ♕c7 45.g4 ♕d6 46.g5 f5. The position arrived at is easily won without the queens, since the knight will go to a4, and at the last moment White will play ♖a1 (the black king is tied down to the kingside for as long as possible), when the intended sacrifice on b6 decides the game. It is still easier to win with the queens without the rooks (for Black always has the exchange of rooks available to him with …♖h7), inasmuch as the queen can then enter the game at a suitable moment by playing ♕e5.

The game, however, proceeded with

43…♜g7

after which White settled matters quickly with

44.♜h8+! ♚xh8 45.♛xf8+ ♚h7 46.♛xf6 ♛e7 47.♞g5+ ♚h8

On 47…♔g8 there follows 48.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 49.♘xe6.

48.♛e5 ♛c7 49.♛xe6 ♛e7 50.♛h3+

1-0

If 50…♔g8, the general exchange 51.♕c8+ ♕f8 52.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 53.♘e6+ follows, after which the c-pawn goes on to queen.

If we imagine that the variation indicated in the note to the 43rd move (g3-g4-g5) had been played, we could speak of the gradual paralysis of e6 or of the majority in the center as an instructive example of a fight against a central majority.

The breakthrough combination on the paradoxically effective square e6 gives the game the stamp of an extraordinary achievement.

Now for a game of an older vintage, which however is for that reason remarkable in its being the stem game of a variation ‘presumed dead’ that I brought back to life. Quite apart from the variation, however, the game represents uncharted territory, inasmuch as it is shown here for the first time (and copied later on by the other masters) that it is rather unimportant whether one has center pawns or not – the main thing is control of the center. We therefore see the restraint of the enemy center, culminating in a blockade of it.

Game 7

Aron Nimzowitsch
Georg Salwe
Karlsbad 1911

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

Considered up to this time to be completely unplayable. As I was later told, after I played the text move Salwe said I must have thought I was playing a game at rook odds!!

3…c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 ♛b6 6.♝d3 ♝d7

It would be better to exchange first, hence 6…cxd4.

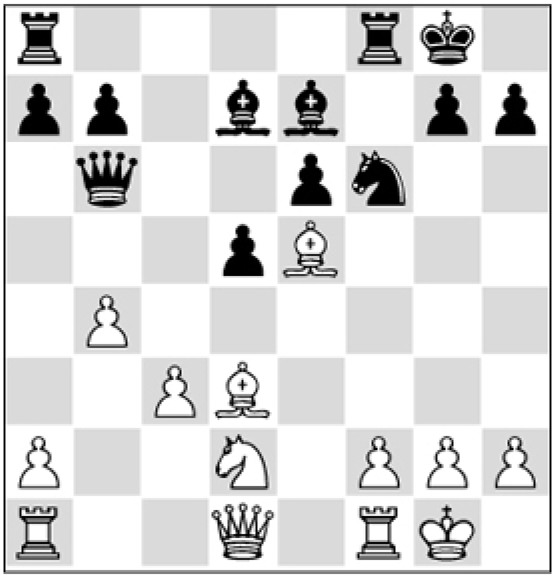
7.dxc5 ♝xc5 8.0-0 f6

Black is about to sweep away his opponent’s center pawns one after another, but this can be of advantage to him only if in so doing he can guarantee the mobility of his own center pawns. But as we shall see, there will be considerable counter-action against this.

9.b4! ♝e7 10.♝f4 fxe5 11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.♝xe5 ♞f6

The point is that the attempt to neutralize the blockade by the e5-bishop with …♗f6 would fail to the check on h5; e.g., 12…♗f6 13.♕h5+ g6? 14.♗xg6+ hxg6 15.♕xg6+ ♔e7 16.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 17.♕g7+. After 12…♘f6, however, the blockade remains intact for the time being.

13.♞d2 0-0



But how easily this blockade could be broken up at the merest slackening of effort on White’s part. For example, 14.♕c2 ♘g4! 15.♗xh7+ ♔h8 16.♗d4 ♕c7 17.g3 e5. To understand the position, we must to recognize that freedom to maneuver appertains to a blockade just as it does to any other effort. Such ability to maneuver consists in the present case of the squares d4 and e5, which White can occupy with pieces, and of the squares c2 and e2, from which the queen can operate. The trick now is to make good use of these points in an economical way.

14.♞f3!

Preventing …♗b5, for after that move 15.♗d4 ♕a6 16.♗xb5 ♕xb5 17.♘g5 would follow, when the e-pawn falls.

14…♝d6 15.♛e2

White did not make the choice between ♕c2 and ♕e2 any sooner than was necessary. This is what I should like the reader to understand by the economical use of squares.

15…♜ac8 16.♝d4

At the right time, since now the move ♘e5 should help further the blockade.

16…♛c7 17.♞e5 ♝e8 18.♜ae1 ♝xe5 19.♝xe5

The dark-squared bishop dominates.

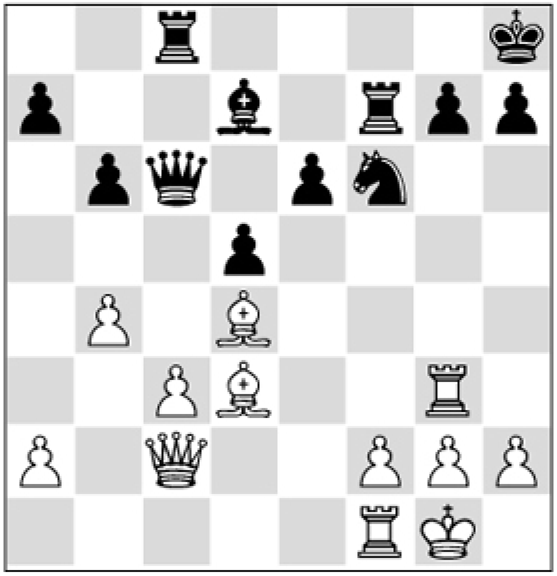
19…♛c6 20.♝d4

To force the bishop on e8, which has been peering at both sides of the board, into a decision.

20…♝d7 21.♛c2!

A clearing move for the sake of the ♖e1, and at the same time setting up a decisive line-up against h7.

21…♜f7 22.♜e3 b6 23.♜g3 ♚h8



24.♝xh7! e5

If 24…♘xh7, 25.♕g6 wins.

25.♝g6 ♜e7 26.♜e1 ♛d6 27.♝e3 d4 28.♝g5

The unobstructed center doesn’t mean much here, since Black has no compensation for the lost pawn and the two bishops.

28…♜xc3 29.♜xc3 dxc3 30.♛xc3 ♚g8 31.a3

Easy does it!

31…♚f8 32.♝h4 ♝e8 33.♝f5 ♛d4

34.♗g3 was threatened.

34.♛xd4 exd4 35.♜xe7 ♚xe7 36.♝d3

The blockade!

36…♚d6 37.♝xf6 gxf6 38.♚f1 ♝c6 39.h4

1-0

A few rounds later in the same tournament I played a game in which this same idea of apparently giving up the center, in order later to occupy it even more rigorously, is even more clearly seen.

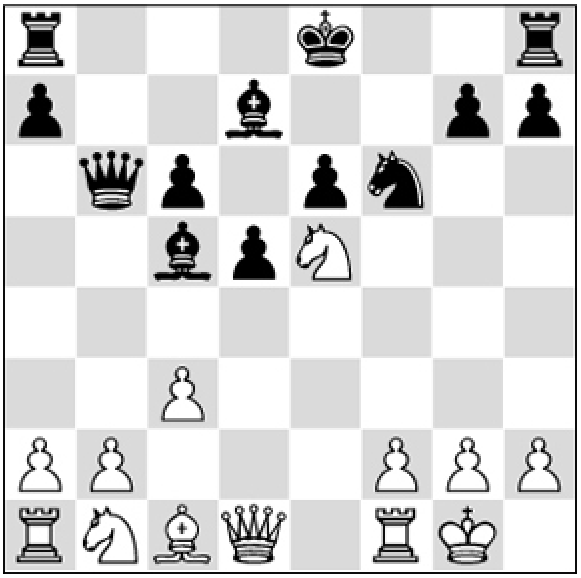
Game 8

Aron Nimzowitsch
Grigory Levenfish
Karlsbad 1911

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 f6 6.♝b5 ♝d7 7.0-0 ♛b6

Or 7…♘xe5 8.♘xe5 ♗xb5 9.♕h5+.

8.♝xc6 bxc6 9.exf6 ♞xf6 10.♞e5 ♝d6 11.dxc5!! ♝xc5



After the game Levenfish declared that my complete surrender of the center was utterly incomprehensible to him.

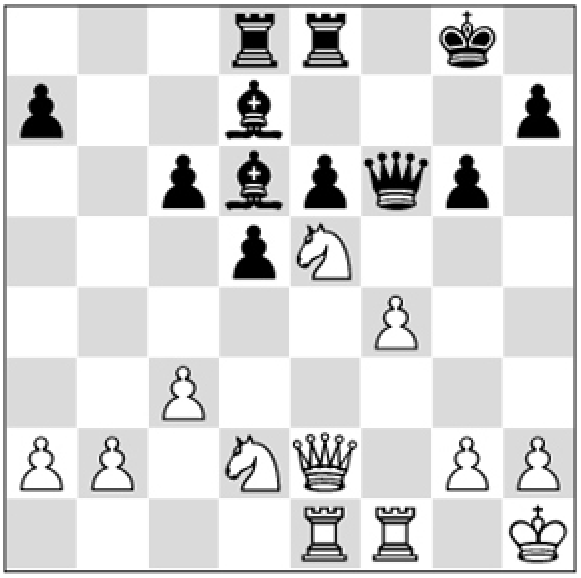
12.♝g5!

Here is the explanation! Black’s next few moves are forced.

12…♛d8 13.♝xf6! ♛xf6 14.♛h5+ g6 15.♛e2

Now White’s plan – the blockade of the black center – is clear.
There followed:

15…♜d8 16.♞d2 0-0 17.♜ae1 ♜fe8 18.♚h1 ♝d6 19.f4



with advantage to White.

In conclusion, we present a game in which restraint appears only in the broadest sense of the word. That is, in this final example, pawns are not affected at all. Everything that happens takes place as it were invisibly. The objects of the process of restraint are files and points, and only at the very last are all the enemy pieces stalemated in a ‘blood-curdling’ way.

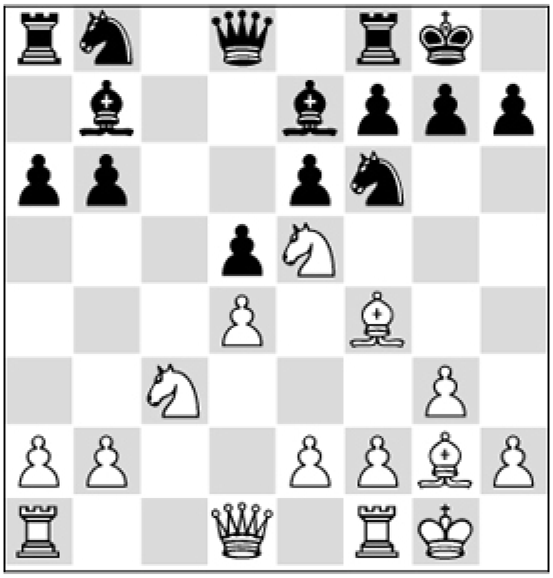
Game 9

Friedrich Sämisch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 b6 4.g3 ♝b7 5.♝g2 ♝e7 6.♞c3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.♞e5 c6

Stronger than 8…♕c8, which Sämisch played in this position (see Game 4).

9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♝f4 a6!!



In order to play …b6-b5 and make the c4-square ripe for invasion by the b8-knight. The c4-point here constitutes an outpost point along the c-file.

11.♖c1 b5 12.♕b3 ♘c6!

Threatening to migrate to c4 (…♘c6-a5) at an accelerated pace. Hence the exchange seems sufficiently motivated.

13.♘xc6 ♗xc6

On the other hand, however, Black wins time by the exchange, for the ‘tempo-guzzling’ knight at e5 has had to trade itself for the harmless c6-knight.

14.h3 ♕d7 15.♔h2 ♘h5!

Combining play on both wings. On the queenside alone play would have continued with …♕b7 followed by …♘d7-b6-a4.

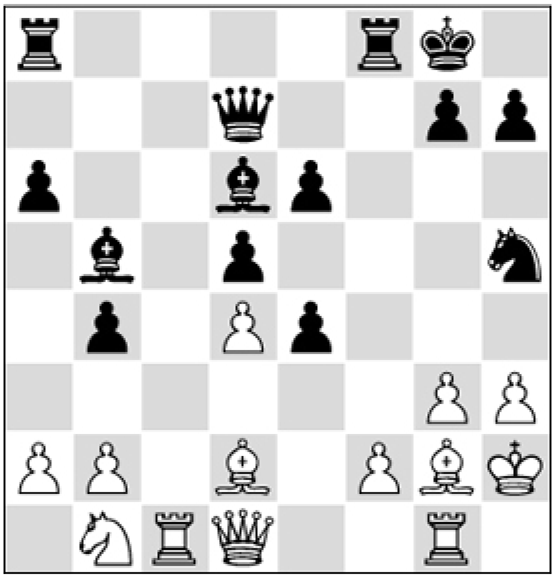
16.♗d2 f5! 17.♕d1 b4 18.♘b1 ♗b5 19.♖g1

We sense very distinctly how White’s game is contracting.

19…♗d6 20.e4

The only chance he has to free himself.

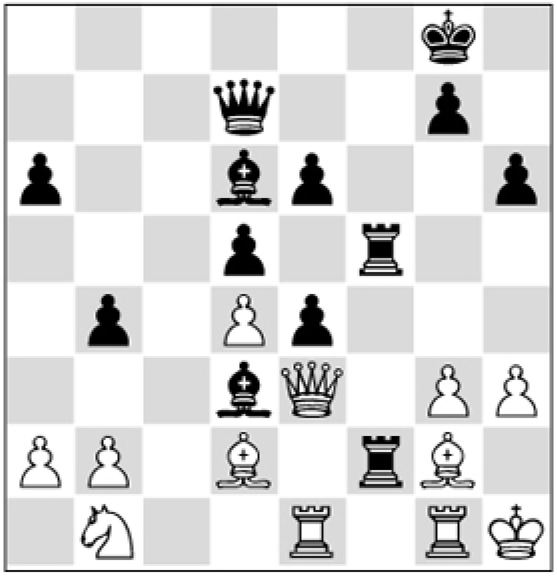
20…fxe4!



21.♕xh5 ♖xf2

The idea of the sacrifice is that White, who possesses neither open files nor points, should be completely tied up. The possession of the enemy second rank has a crippling effect on White, particularly in combination with the sentry posted at b5 (preventing ♖f1). By the same token, White's queenside is always under indirect threat and his knot of pieces cannot be unraveled.

22.♕g5 ♖af8 23.♔h1 ♖8f5 24.♕e3 ♗d3 25.♖ce1 h6!!



A brilliant move that announces zugzwang. White has no move left; e.g., on 26.♔h2 Black plays 26…♖f3, and 26.g4 meets with the same reply.
This uncommonly brilliant zugzwang mechanism stamps this game, which Dr. Lasker in a Dutch newspaper called a splendid achievement, as a companion piece to the Immortal Game. There, the maximal effect of the sacrifice; here, that of the zugzwang.

With this we conclude our presentation of examples from our own praxis and hope that our kindly reader will find various rules, hints, and principles that he can apply at the earliest opportunity.

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Chess Praxis

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Foreword

The modern chess master is not given to hoarding secrets. Positional play, like any other province of chess art, is built up from a collection of devices – and these can be learned. This fact is the purpose and intrinsic *raison d'être* of the present book.

Accordingly, it is the intent of this book to instruct the reader in *positional play*. The stratagems already indicated in my earlier work are examined in detail and with scrupulous care (in interspersed articles), and are then illustrated by available master games. And yet this book has been purposely kept completely independent of *My System*: at no point is any sort of knowledge of the principles of *My System* presupposed. When deemed necessary these principles have been explained in brief. It is not at all difficult to make practical use of 'prophylaxis', 'over-protection', etc., but one must first become acquainted with them!

This book also has its value as a collection of games; it brings together – setting aside those already published in *My System* and *The Blockade* and consequently not reproduced here – 109 of my best games.

A few words concerning the layout of the book. We have refrained from self-praise, for we have come to the view that this 'variation', which stems from the pseudo-classical period is just as little 'playable' as, say, the 3…c7-c5 line and many others whose praises were at that time sung in every musical key. Self-praise is 'playable' in only one instance, namely, when merited recognition has remained unjustly withheld; in all other cases it comes across as tasteless and demoralizing.

This time I have not spared the indexes. In addition to a detailed table of contents, we have provided indexes of games and openings. Furthermore, since, with respect to the division of the material, we could take into account only the more comprehensive stratagems, like centralization, restraint, etc., and not the ‘minor stratagems’, such as ‘open lines’, the ‘7th rank’, etc., we thought it expedient to provide an index of various tactical maneuvers used in the games. That this index could not be exhaustive goes without saying; still, the amateur player is given the opportunity to study more closely those ‘elements’ (lines, passed pawns, etc.) that are of greatest interest to him.

One point in closing. I should have liked to have seen every game provided with four or five diagrams, to facilitate the playing-over of variations that are often quite intricate. But corpulent compendiums are not in favor today – slender is the watchword. Yet there is a solution that is as simple as it is effective and one that we can well recommend, and that is, in playing over each game, to use two chess boards at the same time (perhaps a regular playing set and a pocket set), playing over the game on one board and going through the variations on the other. This is much simpler that one might imagine: the effort involved is minimal, and often quite interesting variations are no longer lost.

With that, we believe we have said all that need be said, and we can pass on to the substance of the book itself.

The Author, August 1928

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Part I

Centralization

In modern tournament practice, excellent results can be achieved with centralization. The fact that control of the central squares constitutes in all circumstances a strategic necessity has even up to the present time not been widely known, and so it happens not infrequently that even experienced players ‘slip away’ from the center. We, however, in each individual case, take special care to see to it that every omission committed by the opponent in the center of the board is truly punished.

The sins of omission in the center spring either from habitual neglect of strategic necessities (in other words from – pardon the expression – strategic carelessness) or from a passionate commitment to the idea of an attack on the wing! In the first case the opponent lets the mastery of the center be wrested from him; in the second, he willingly gives up central control to try his luck at an intrepid raid on the flank. But a flank attack affords a real chance only when the center has been closed or when it can be held firm with a minimal commitment of forces. If the latter is not the case, then the attack dies from exhaustion, for it would be unthinkable to be able to combine a difficult attacking formation with an exceedingly difficult defensive formation! Game 3 provides a clear illustration of this. The central breakthrough leads to a complete paralysis – I had almost said, a demoralization – of the diversionary troops on the flank.

The mechanics of centralization are implemented – after a conspicuous restraint of any possible mobility on the part of the enemy pawn center – by drawing ever-narrower circles around the central square complex. In this sense, we rejoice in the winning of every file or diagonal, be it ever so modest, as long as it is directed at the center of the board. But when we have succeeded in bringing about the more ideal ‘long-distance effect’ in the form of establishing some of our own pieces in the center, then we may be quite satisfied with the success of our policy of centralization (see Game 12).

An accumulation of forces in the center in the middlegame (as outlined above) can be exploited to create strong attacks on the flank, for in the final analysis centralization is not an end in itself; rather, for us, it is merely the most rational method of mobilizing available forces for action on the wings (cf. Game 8). Still, it can be said that a reasonably centralized position can in all circumstances be regarded as *consolidated*.

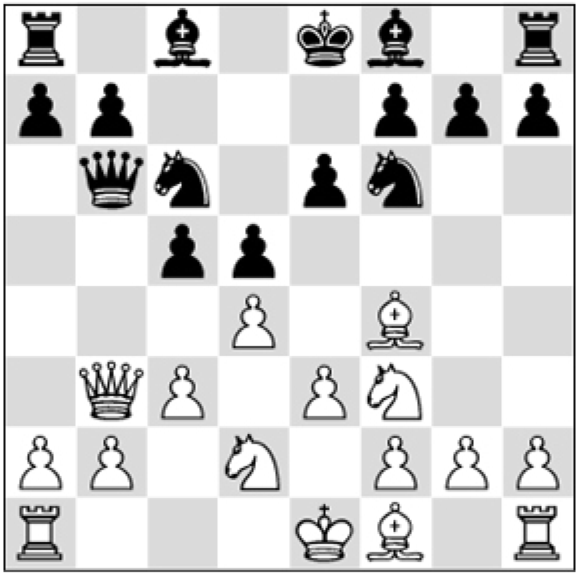
Still, a centralized position is by no means excluded from dangers. For instance, the opponent could form the idea of removing the pieces from the center by means of exchanges. In this case, the task is to preserve a sufficient balance of centralization into the endgame (Game 7). Another danger might be glimpsed here – the possibility that the opponent could *sacrifice* one of his own blockading pieces in order *suddenly* to expand his own central territory. The danger intimated here can be parried by adapting to the new circumstances as quickly as possible; sometimes a counter-sacrifice, for the purpose of sharply exploiting a central blockading diagonal, is especially suitable (see Game 8). We shall be content for the time being with these brief preliminary remarks; everything else will be made clear by the games themselves and their introductory discussions.

1. Neglect of the central squares complex as a typical and often-recurring error; the concept of the central focusing lens

Games 1 – 3

In Games 1 and 2 the central domain is neglected for no apparent reason; in Game 3 it is ignored for the sake of a flank attack. Such a strategy can only succeed against faulty counterplay.

The central focusing lens is, to be sure, an imaginary one, yet it is quite an effective instrument that in every case reveals whether the move chosen increases, or on the other hand reduces, the accumulated effect of our forces. Had Brinckmann made use of this central focusing lens in our tournament game at Berlin 1928, he would hardly have chosen, after 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♗f4 ♘f6 4.e3 c5 5.c3, the move 5…♕b6, for after 6.♕b3 ♘c6 7.♘bd2:

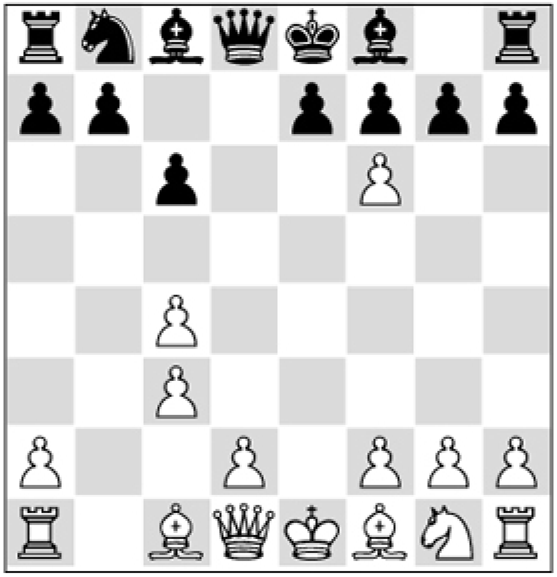


the centralizing 7…♗d6 turned out to be impossible. Now he should at least have continued with 7…♗e7 but preferred the decentralizing 7…♘h5. There followed a brief but effective punitive expedition: 8.♕xb6 axb6 9.♗c7 c4 10.♗xb6, when Black now realized that he had to recall his knight with loss of time. Hence, 10…♘f6 (also parrying the threat 11.e4). Then 11.♗c7 was played, with advantage. Had Black not played 7…♘h5 White would have lacked justification for his marauding raid; e.g., 7…♗e7! (instead of 7…♘h5?) 8.♕xb6? axb6 9.♗c7 c4 10.♗xb6 ♘d7 and Black gets an attack. We shall discover further opportunities for persuading ourselves of the usefulness of our lens.

Game 1

Aron Nimzowitsch
Carl Ahues
Berlin 1928 (13)

1.c4 ♞f6 2.♞c3 c6 3.e4 d5 4.e5 d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3



6…gxf6

Clearer was the play after 6…exf6. Why clearer? It is indeed so, because the set-up with …♗d6, …0-0, and …♖e8 could no longer be prevented. This arrangement would have meant centralization and with that the greatest possible safeguard against any conceivable surprises. Matters turn out quite differently after the text move: Black very soon gets a ‘proud’ pawn center, certainly, but it is questionable whether this center really gives Black cause to be proud. Let us examine: the *mobility* of this center is limited; e.g., 6…gxf6 7.♘f3 e5 8.d4 e4? 9.♘h4! f5 10.g3 followed by ♘g2 and ♗f4, with paralysis of Black’s pawns. But even by holding the center pawns where they are the center turns out to be weak, as demonstrated in the note to Black’s 9th move. Hence, 6…exf6 was the right procedure.

7.♞f3 c5

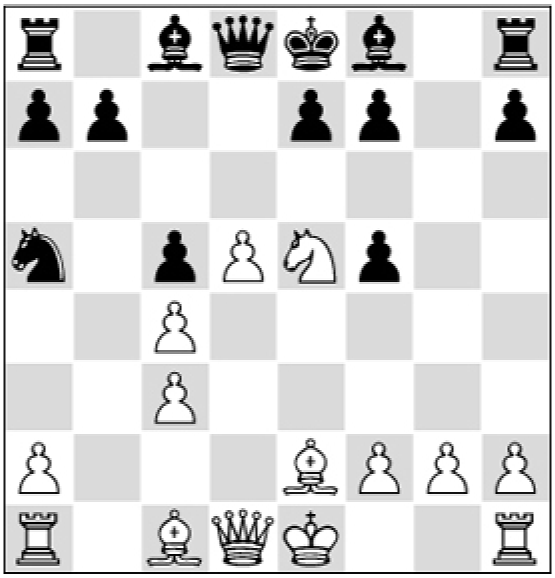
Positionally, 7…e6 looks better, with a defensive posture in the center.

8.d4 ♞c6 9.♝e2 f5

To be considered was 9…e5, meaning to keep the pawn there (the policy of ‘holding out’). The sequel would be 10.♗e3 ♕a5 (or 10…b6 11.0-0 followed by ♕d2 and ♖ad1, when White has pressure along the d-file) 11.0-0 ♕xc3 12.dxe5! (much better than 12.♖c1, which would only have driven the queen back for the defense via a5 to c7) 12…fxe5 (or 12…♘xe5 13.♕d5!) 13.♘g5 ♗f5 14.♗h5 ♗g6 15.♗xg6 hxg6

16.♕d5 and wins. The text move is a serious mistake that hands over the whole center. Relatively best seems 9…♖g8, although Black would remain at a disadvantage all the same; e.g., 10.g3 ♗h3 11.♖b1 ♕c7 12.♕a4 ♗d7 13.♕c2, etc.

10.d5 ♞a5 11.♞e5



With this the game is decided.

11…♝d7

Or 11…♗g7 12.♕a4+ ♔f8 (12…♗d7? 13.♘xd7! ♗xc3+ 14.♗d2 ♗xa1 15.♘f6+ ♔f8 16.♗h6#!) 13.f4 f6 14.♘f3, with complete positional dominance.

12.♝h5 ♝g7 13.♞xf7 ♛b6 14.♞xh8+ ♚f8 15.♞f7

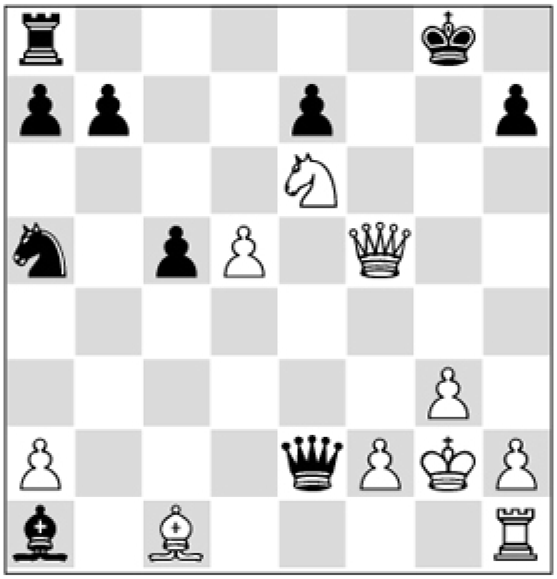
White freely and willingly returns all his material advantage, but he gets a colossal knight at e6. This is how it should be done. Do not always desire blindly to hold on to your gains! Play with elasticity (that is, turn acquired advantages into other advantages) – that is the watchword!

15…♝e8 16.♞g5 ♝xc3+ 17.♚f1!

Not 17.♗d2 because of 17…♗xh5 18.♕xh5 ♗xd2+ 19.♔xd2 ♕b2+.

17…♝xa1 18.♞e6+ ♚g8 19.♝xe8 ♜xe8 20.♛h5 ♜a8 21.♛xf5 ♛b4 22.g3 ♛xc4+ 23.♚g2 ♛e2

Black is helpless.



24.♝d2

Still more exact seems 24.♖e1! ♕xe1 25.♘g5 ♗g7! 26.♕f7+ ♔h8 27.♗b2! and wins.

24…♞c4

Or 24…♕xd2 25.♘g5 ♗g7 26.♕e6+, with a smothered mate.

25.♜e1 ♛xd2 26.♞g5 ♞d6

The rest of the game is a bloodletting.

27.♛xh7+ ♚f8 28.♛xe7+ ♚g8 29.♛h7+ ♚f8 30.♛h6+ ♚g8 31.♛g6+ ♝g7

Poor bishop, your hour has struck. Yet there is solace: you will perish in your native land!

32.♛h7+ ♚f8 33.♞e6+ ♚e8 34.♞xg7+ ♚d8 35.♞e6+ ♚e8 36.♜e5

1-0

Game 2

Efim Bogoljubow
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927 (7)

1.c4 e6 2.♞c3 ♞f6 3.e4 c5 4.g3

Worthy of consideration was 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♗b4 7.♕d3, a line originating with Bogoljubow.

4…d5 5.e5 d4 6.exf6 dxc3 7.dxc3

There was not much wrong with 7.bxc3; e.g., 7…♕xf6 8.d4 (8…cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♕xd4 11.♗xb4 ♕e4+ 12.♗e2 ♕xh1 13.♕d6 ♘c6 14.♗f3 and wins). But the text move is also playable, as the black pawn majority will hardly prove able to develop itself further!?

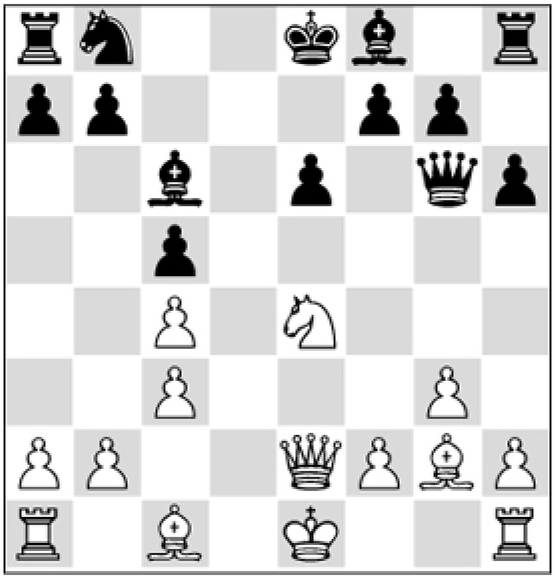
7…♛xf6! 8.♞f3

Here, 8.♗g2 could have been seriously considered; e.g., 8…♘c6 9.♘e2 e5 10.0-0 and f2. Now the bishops will find it much more difficult to exert their influence along the central diagonals.

8…h6 9.♝g2 ♝d7 10.♞d2!

With this move the error on move 8 is alleviated to some extent.

10…♝c6 11.♞e4 ♛g6 12.♛e2



12…♝e7

Not 12…f5 because of the reply 13.♗f3 followed by ♘d2, when the e5-square would remain permanently weak.

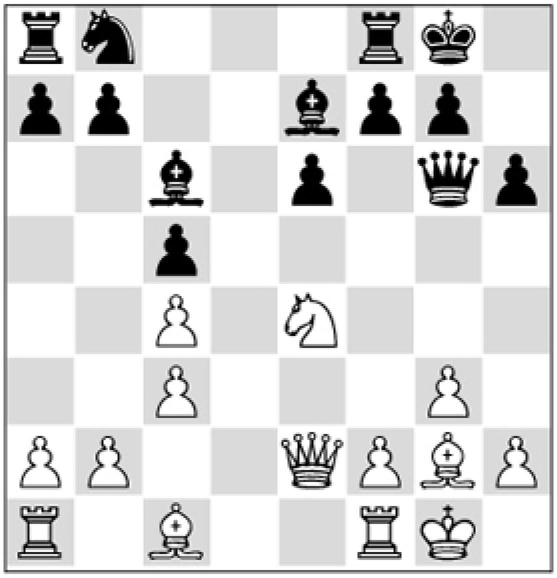
We see that the problem White has to solve here is compound:

A) Black’s pawn majority has to be *restrained*;

B) The *central* hegemony should fall to White.

This compound problem can in fact be solved to a certain extent, but only through the most precise utilization of the weapons at his command.

13.0-0 0-0



14.h4!?

He neglects the center! Why not 14.f4!. If then 14…♘d7, then 15.♗d2 ♔h8! 16.♖ae1 ♘f6 17.♗c1, intending ♘d2-f3-e5. After the wholesale exchanges on e4 following move 17 we still see no opportunity for the second player to advance his pawn majority.

14…f5 15.♘d2 ♝xg2

He avoids the trap 15…♗xh4 16.♘f3!.

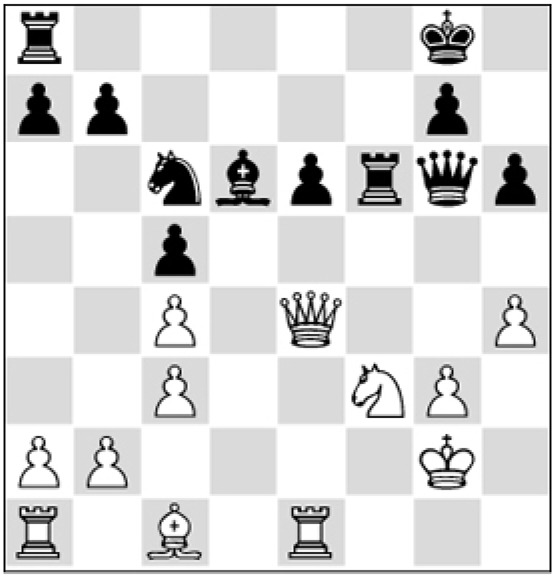
16.♚xg2 ♘c6 17.♘f3

Intending 18.♗f4.

17…f4

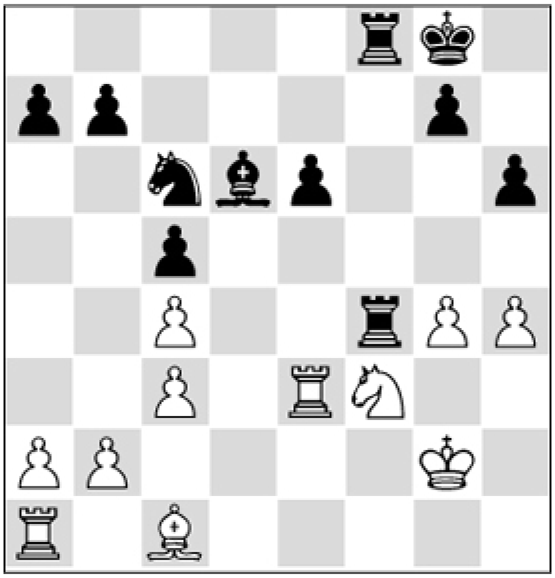
Bolting the door. There now follows a last attempt at consolidation, after which White’s game collapses.

18.♖e1 ♖f6 19.♕e4 fxg3 20.fxg3 ♝d6



The weakness at g3, the inadequate development, and the exposed kingside – all this is too much even for a centralized position. Now we are able to appreciate how much damage was done by 14.h4.

21.g4 ♕xe4 22.♖xe4 ♖af8 23.♖e3 ♖f4



The less-experienced reader should observe here the ‘work’ along the open file.

24.g5

24.♖xe6 ♖xg4+ 25.♔f2 ♘e5 results in a débâcle for White.

24…♖g4+ 25.♔h1

Or 25.♔f2 ♘e5 26.♔e2 ♖g2+ 27.♔f1 ♖g3, winning a piece.

25…hxg5 26.hxg5 ♚f7 27.♞g1

On 27.g6+ the best reply is 27…♔f6 (not 27…♔e7 because of 28.♘h2 ♖h8 29.♖e2 ♖gh4?? 30.♗g5+).

27…♜h8+ 28.♞h3 ♚e7! 29.b3 ♝f4

With the king at f7 the pin with ♖f3 would now be possible, hence Black's 28th move.

30.♜f3 ♞e5

White resigned.

Game 3

Aron Nimzowitsch

Theodor von Scheve

Ostend 1907 (14)

1.♞f3 d5 2.d3 ♞c6 3.d4!

For now the enemy c-pawn is blocked by the knight.

3…e6

3…♘f6 is better.

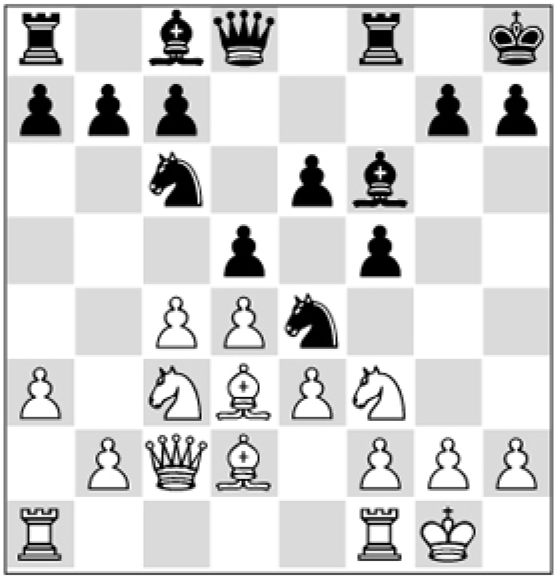
4.e3 ♞f6 5.c4 ♝e7 6.♞c3 0-0 7.♝d2 ♞e4

Correctly played. Observe, by the way, that the penetration by this knight could hardly have been fended off by 7.♗d3 (instead of the 7.♗d2 played); e.g., 7…♘b4! 8.♗e2 c5.

8.♝d3 f5

Not particularly good! A Stonewall is not playable with a knight on c6. Black should have contented himself with the modest 8…♘xd2 9.♕xd2 ♘b4 10.♗e2 dxc4 11.♗xc4 c5.

9.a3 ♝f6 10.♛c2 ♚h8 11.0-0



11…a6

Probably to avoid a potential 12.♘b5. It was time, however, to forgo all thought of Stonewall attacks (…g7-g5, say). With the simple 11…♘xd2 12.♕xd2 dxc4 13.♗xc4 e5 14.♖ad1! e4! Black could maintain a nearly level game (15.♘e1 ♖e8 16.f3 f4!). And why not? With moves like 2.d3, 3.d4, and 9.a3, White could not exert pressure anytime soon! Moreover, Black, too, has achieved something: the diversion on the part of the knight has yielded him the two bishops. So it is not surprising that there still should have been a possibility at hand of balancing the position.

12.♖ac1 h6 13.♖fd1 g5

This would be playable only if White were *not* in a position to open the central files. With an open center, on the other hand, a flank attack would appear to be hopeless.

14.♗e1 g4 15.♘e5!

The previously still latent d-file now becomes active; see the next note.

15…♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♘g5

If 16…♘xe5, then 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♗xe4 fxe4 19.♖xd5, etc.

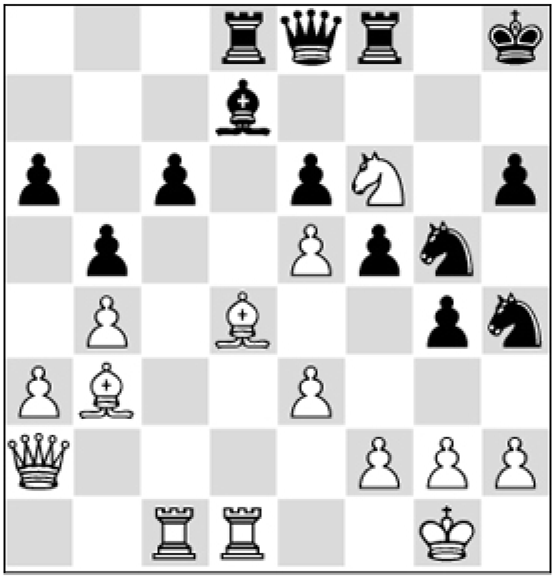
17.♘e2 ♕e8 18.♗c3 dxc4 19.♗xc4

The d-file becomes powerful and Black cannot get an attacking position.

19…♗d7 20.♘f4 ♖d8 21.b4 b5 22.♗b3 ♘e7 23.♗d4 c6 24.♕a2 ♘g6

If 24…♘d5, then 25.♗xd5 cxd5 26.♖c7, etc.

25.♘h5 ♘h4 26.♘f6



Compare the two positions: White has two *center* files, two *centralized* bishops, a colossal knight, with c6, e6, and d7 all hanging. Black has two marginalized knights – and nothing else. It is not surprising that the attack Black now initiates gets repelled with terrible losses for the attacker.

26…♕g6 27.♗b6 ♘hf3+ 28.gxf3 ♖xf6 29.♗xd8 ♘xf3+ 30.♔f1 ♖f7 31.♗f6+ ♖xf6 32.exf6 ♘xh2+ 33.♔e1 ♘f3+ 34.♔e2 f4 35.♖xd7

1-0

2. Sins of omission committed in the central territory

In Game 4 Black succeeded in breaking through, but White, with correct play, could have rehabilitated his position – from the *center* outward (move 21). He neglected this and found himself at a disadvantage.

In Game 5 the first player was threatened with a kingside attack, but he had the opportunity of staging a counter-attack in the center. He refrained from this, as he thought such a course did not promise him an immediate success, and as a result succumbed to his opponent’s kingside assault.

In Game 6 Black was on the point of occupying some central squares. White should have opposed this, for central points should never be surrendered *without a struggle*. But White underestimated the ‘central danger’, and so his opponent was able to build up a powerful position in the center.

The errors just outlined must be attributed not only to insufficient knowledge of central strategy but also to a certain panicky frame of mind. And the practical application of this insight? Well, even in positions that appear critical, remediation, proceeding *from the center* and spreading outward, is possible often enough. Therefore: ‘Centralize and don’t despair!’

Game 4

Erich Cohn
Aron Nimzowitsch
Ostend 1907 (9)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗f4 ♘h5

Already in 1907 I went my own way!

4.♗d2 ♘f6 5.c4 ♘bd7 6.♗c3

Or 6.♘c3 e5 7.e4 ♗e7, when the tempo lost to White (4.♗d2) is revealed as a *quantité négligeable*.

6…e6 7.e3 d5

Better is 7…b6 and …♗b7.

8.c5

Playable.

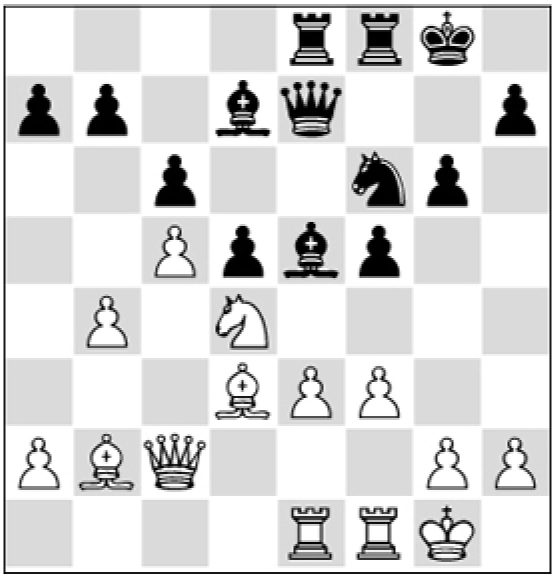
8…♘e4 9.♗d3 f5 10.b4 g6 11.♗b2 ♗g7 12.♘c3

More in the nature of the position is 12.0-0 followed by ♘e5 and f2-f3.

12…0-0 13.♕c2 c6 14.♘e2 ♕e7 15.0-0

We prefer 15.♘e5.

15…e5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♘d4 ♗d7 19.f3! ♘f6 20.♖ae1 ♖ae8



21.e4?

The decisive mistake; correct was 21.f4 ♗c7 (21…♗xd4 22.♗xd4) 22.♘f3, when the white position would appear to be consolidated. The text move leads to ruin at express-train speed.

21…fxe4 22.fxe4 ♕g7 23.exd5 ♘g4 24.♕c4 ♗xh2+ 25.♔h1 ♖xe1 26.dxc6+

Or 26.♖xe1 ♘f2+ and mate in four moves.

26…♗e6 27.♕xe6+ ♖xe6 28.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 29.♘xe6 ♕f2

0-1

Game 5

Rudolf Spielmann

Aron Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1923 (11)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♗f4 ♗f5

An innovation.

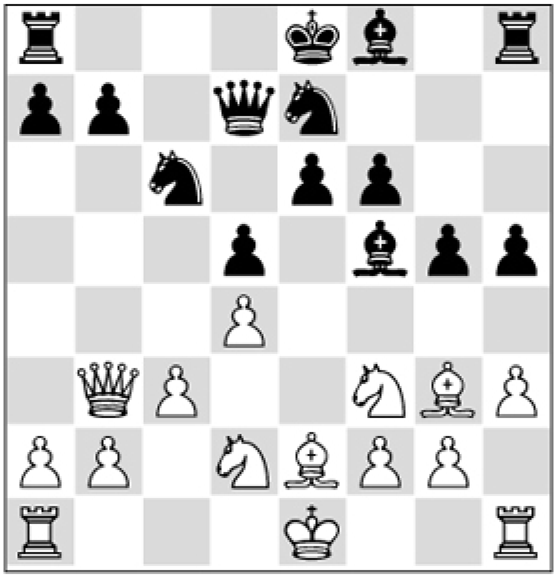
6.♘f3 e6 7.♕b3 ♕d7 8.♘bd2 f6

This secures e5 and prepares a general advance on the kingside. Such a strategic diversion is justified here, inasmuch as his own center looks reasonably secure – his e6-square is well covered and the diagonal from f5 to b1 makes both a ‘centralizing’ as well as pleasant impression. The fact that a flank attack, when one’s center is poorly secured, is inadmissible, is something we have emphasized more than once.

9.♝e2

Here 9.c4 was necessary; e.g., 9…♗b4 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗b5, with equality, or 9…♘b4 10.♖c1 and White has no problems!

9…g5 10.♝g3 h5 11.h3 ♞ge7



12.0-0

12.c4 would no longer improve his central position to any significant extent; e.g., 12…dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♘d5, with a strongly placed knight in the center. And yet White should have preferred this line of play.

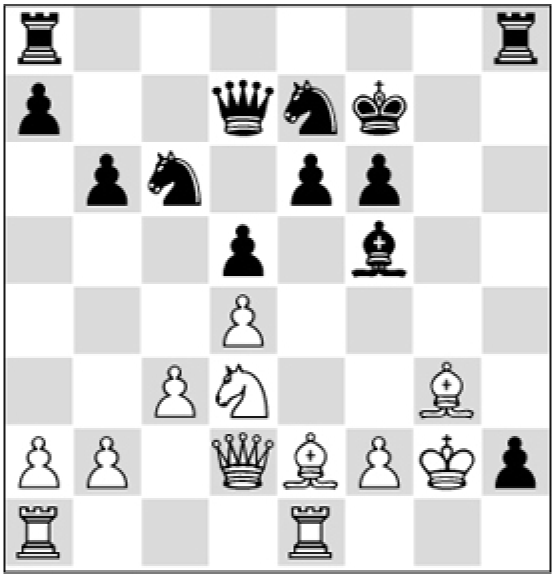
12…♝h6 13.♞e1 g4 14.♛d1 ♝xd2

Winning a pawn.

15.♛xd2 gxh3 16.♞d3 b6 17.♜fe1 h4 18.♝h2 ♚f7

Not 18…0-0-0 because of 19.♘c5!. Now White is lost.

19.g4 hxg3 20.♝xg3 h2+ 21.♚g2



21…♝e4+

There was a clear win here with the continuation 21…e5!; e.g., 22.dxe5 ♗e4+ 23.f3 ♖ag8 24.e6+ (24.♕f4 ♘f5 25.fxe4 ♘xg3 26.♕xf6+ ♔e8 27.e6 h1♕+ 28.♖xh1 ♘xh1+ and wins) 24…♕xe6 25.♘f4 ♕g4!.

22.♝f3

22.f3 would have permitted a longer resistance.

22…♞f5! 23.♝xe4 dxe4 24.♞f4

If 24.♖xe4, 24…♕d5, etc.

24…e5 25.♞e2 ♞h4+ 26.♝xh4 ♛g4+

and mate in a few moves.

Game 6

Frederick Yates
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927 (10)

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞f6

An innovation I introduced at San Sebastian.

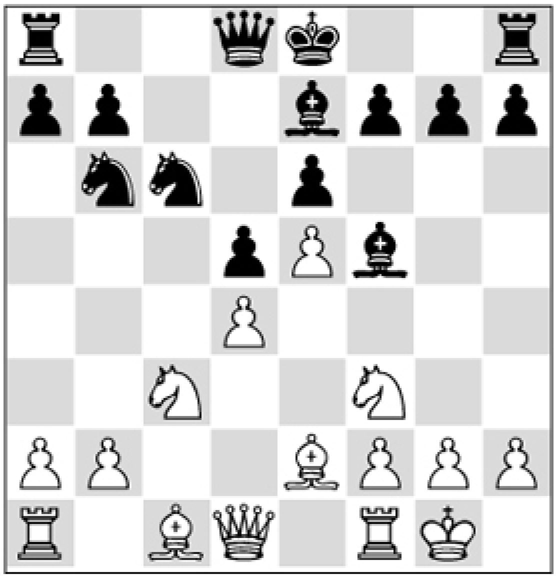
3.e5 ♞d5 4.♝c4 ♞b6 5.♝e2 ♞c6

White has lost time with the bishop, but on the other hand Black’s knight stands less well on b6. The bishop maneuver is therefore not to be censured.

6.c3 d5 7.d4

We would have preferred 7.exd6.

7…cxd4 8.cxd4 ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.♘c3 ♗e7



11.♘e1

If the attack intended by this move, f2-f4 followed by g2-g4 and f4-f5, really proved to be feasible, it would show Black's 8…♗f5 to be wrong, and that is surely nonsense. In fact, 11.♘e1 does not give him anything special, and this diversion would be much better replaced with systematic play down the c-file; e.g., 11.♗e3 0-0 12.♖c1 followed by a2-a3, b2-b4, and ♘f3-d2-b3-c5, when the outpost advocated in *My System* is achieved.

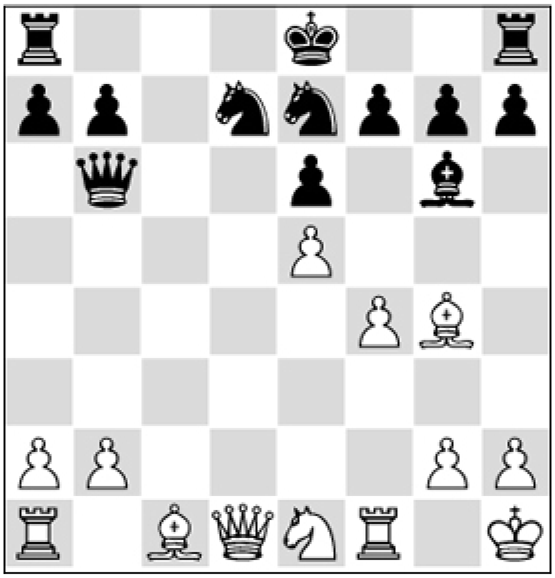
11…♘d7! 12.♗g4!

Cleverly played. On 12.f4?, 12…♘xd4 13.♕xd4?? ♗c5 would follow. Also unfavorable would be 12.♗e3 because of 12…♘dxe5 13.dxe5 d4 14.♗d2 dxc3 15.♗xc3 ♕c7, with some advantage for Black. With the help of the text move, Yates is able to carry through the desired f2-f4 in a quite astounding manner!

12…♗g6 13.f4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd5! ♘c6!

On 14…♗c5 the strong 15.b4 follows. 14…exd5 would be completely bad because of 15.♗xd7+ and 16.♕xd4.

15.♘xe7 ♕b6+ 16.♔h1 ♘xe7



17.♕a4

Here we have the typical error mentioned in our introductory discussion! Black is clearly planning to occupy the central points, and White should of course fight for these instead of just running away with 17.♕a4. Hence, 17.♕e2! (intending 18.♗e3) 17…♘d5 18.♗f3 ♕c5 19.♗d2 ♘7b6 20.♖c1 ♕e7, and now perhaps 21.♗e3, when White has ‘more’ of the center than Black.

But even if this ‘more’ had not proved attainable, what would it matter? Even then, White would have had to put up a fight! Now, however, he is overtaken by a just retribution.

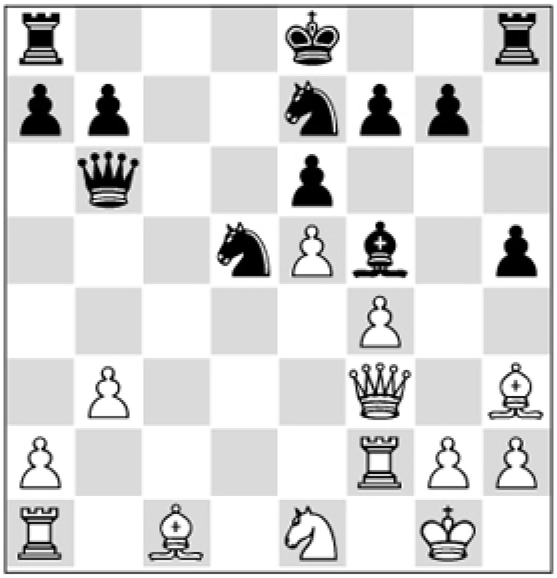
17…h5 18.♗h3

Forced, for after 18.♗f3 there would follow 18…♘f5 and the win of fresh central terrain. Moreover, a threat of mate would arise with 19…h4 and 20…♘g3+.

18…♗f5 19.♕a3 ♕b5

Making room for the d7-knight, which aims to go to d5 via b6.

20.♔g1 ♘b6 21.♕f3 ♘bd5 22.b3 ♕b6+ 23.♖f2



23…♜c8

This move, in conjunction with the next, leads to the decentralization of one of his rooks, thereby introducing a flaw into a position that has been so harmoniously constructed. The continuation 23…0-0-0, on the other hand, promised an undisturbed harmony in his game. After 24…♔b8 and 25…g6, nothing would stand in the way of his using the rooks in the center – hence, 26…♖d7 and 27…♖c8.

23…♗g4! looks still better; e.g., 24.♗xg4 hxg4 25.♕xg4 ♖xh2 26.♕xg7 0-0-0 27.♔xh2 ♕xf2 28.♘d3 ♕e2 and Black must win.

Lastly, a combination of both methods of play was also possible, namely, 23… 0-0-0 24.♗a3 and now 24…♗g4. If then, say, 25.♖c1+ ♔b8 26.♗c5, then 26…♕xc5 27.♖xc5 ♗xf3 28.♖xf3 ♖c8, with a decisive invasion via the c-file.

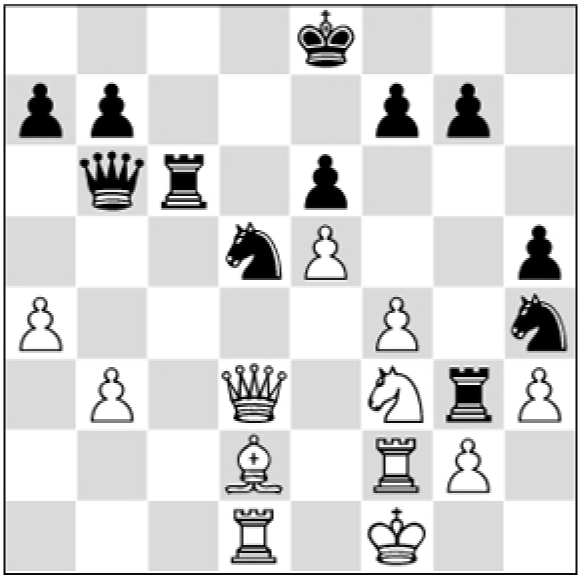
24.♝d2 ♜h6

Interesting, and after all, the black position, centralized as it is, can afford an adventurous ride. But more correct in any event was 24…0-0 followed by …g7-g6 and …♖fd8.

25.♜d1 ♝xh3 26.♛xh3 ♞f5 27.♛d3 ♜g6 28.♞f3 ♜g4 29.h3 ♜g3 30.a4 ♞h4

Black’s build-up now suffers from an inner conflict: his position, with scattered rooks, makes a mating attack seem desirable, but the rest of his army is organized rather for the endgame phase. The knight at d5 is a tremendous piece for the endgame, and the second player would have undisputed control over the light squares.

31.♚f1 ♜c6!



In order to negate the force of White’s threatened ♕h7, then ♕g8; the rook runs away in good time.

By the way, Black has to maneuver very carefully.

32.a5 ♛d8 33.♚g1 ♝f5

33…♘xf3+ 34.♖xf3 ♖xf3 35.♕xf3 g6 would not be good because of 36.f5.

34.♚h2 a6 35.♛b1

To threaten 36.♘d4.

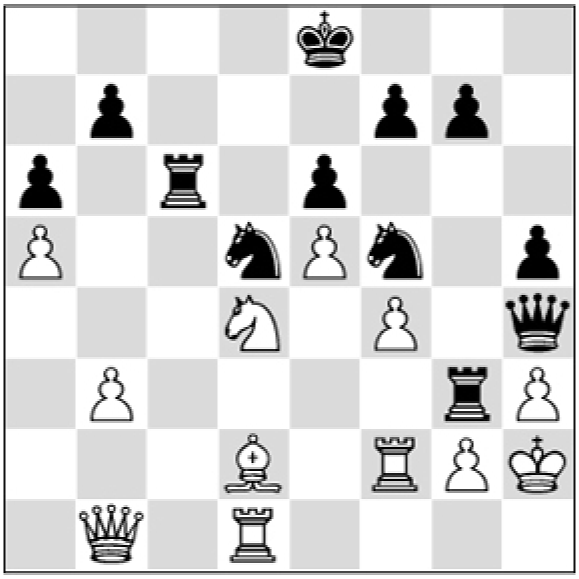
35...♛e7

He submits to the threat, shifting his attention, incidentally, to c5 (…♕c5).

36.♝d4

This loses; better was 36.♖c1.

36...♛h4!



Inasmuch as the scattered troop detachments cannot return to their army, the army comes to them.

37.♝e1

If 37.♘xc6, then 37…♖xh3+ and mate in two moves.

37…♘xf4

Again with the threat of mate (that is, by 38…♖xg2+, etc.).

38.♜xf4 ♜xh3+

The simplest.

39.gxh3 ♕xf4+ 40.♚g2 ♘e3+

and mate in two moves. For this game Black was awarded a prize of ten pounds ‘for the best played game’.

3. The vitality of centrally placed forces

Games 7 – 8

In the notes to Game 7 we have occasion to observe in what manner and method a menacing centralization can be transformed into an advantage that can be made use of in the endgame phase. The application of this stratagem is of importance not only as a means of self-defense (we are envisioning a situation in which the defender seeks to eliminate the hostile central pieces by means of exchanges!), but also when it is necessary to *proceed slowly but surely.* In Game 8, the second player, with the help of a pretty pawn sacrifice, reduces *ad absurdum* his opponent’s attempts to besiege the center, for many nice open lines are now beckoning. But here, too, he has reckoned without his host (i.e., the vitality of forces in the center): the blockade that seemed dead comes back to life, rejuvenated – and throttles him…

Game 7

Three Norwegian Allies
Aron Nimzowitsch
Kristiania 1921

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 ♘e7 7.0-0 ♘bc6 8.♗f4 ♗d6 9.♘e5

9.♕d2 looks more natural.

9…♗xe2 10.♘xe2 ♗xe5 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5 12.dxe5

Now each side has a pawn majority on a flank, but White’s preponderance strikes us as the less mobile.

12…♕d7 13.f4 0-0-0 14.c3 ♔b8 15.♕b3 c5 16.♖ae1

16.♖ad1!.

16…h5! 17.♔h1 ♘f5

And now the mobility of White’s pawn majority has shrunk to nearly nothing. But there is a long way to go before the paralysed majority can be rolled up.

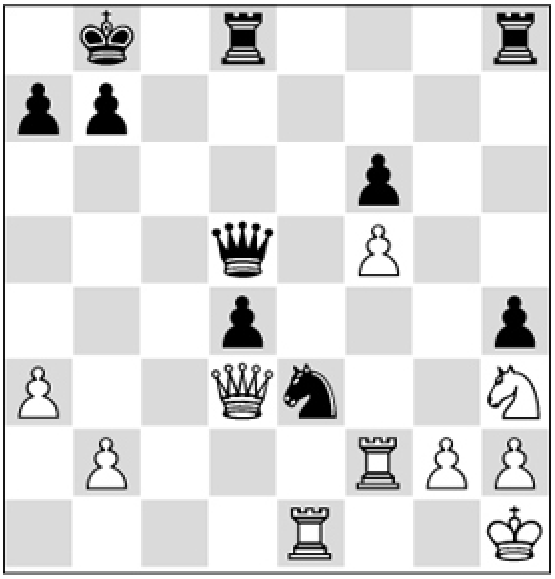
18.♘g1 h4 19.♘h3 d4 20.cxd4 cxd4 21.♕d3 ♘e3 22.♖f2 ♕d5

Black has achieved something after all – namely, a strong central position, a good, even if blocked, passed pawn, and the possibility of playing …f7-f6.

23.a3 f6

This rolling-up of the apparently isolated (thanks to 21…♘e3) pawn mass could have been prepared by …♖he8, and, if possible, by …a7-a6 (and to eventually threaten to lift the blockade with …♕b5). But the text move is entirely correct and suitable to make clear Black’s superiority.

24.exf6 gxf6 25.f5!



25…♖hg8

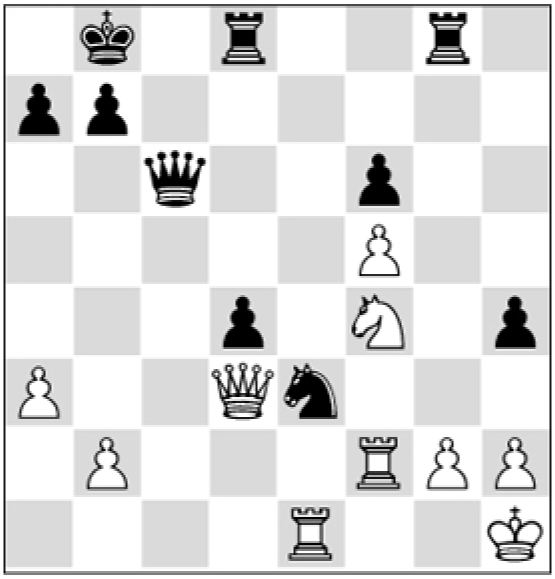
Black needed somehow to prevent or render harmless the obviously intended ♘f4. For this purpose the preventive 25…♖he8 was to be recommended. If 26.♘f4, then 26…♕xf5 (still stronger and immediately decisive, certainly, is the *combinative* refutation of 26.♘f4, namely the riposte 26…♘g4!!) 27.♕xf5 (27.♖xe3?? dxe3!) 27…♘xf5 28.♖xe8 ♖xe8 29.♘d3 ♘d6! 30.♖xf6 ♔c7, when all Black’s pieces stand ready to support the d-pawn. The strategic content of the above variation could be characterized as follows: Black’s *centralization* has been *passed on from the middlegame to the endgame phase*, a stratagem that can be warmly recommended in all pertinent cases.

In the name of objective truth it has to be said that, in connection with the stratagem outlined above, 25…♖hg8 cannot by any means be dismissed out of hand. The rook move to g8 is therefore completely correct.

25…♖he8 (instead of 25…♖hg8) 26.♖fe2? ♘xg2! 27.♖xe8 ♘f4+ 28.♕e4 ♖xe8 and wins.

26.♘f4 ♕c6

Our often-mentioned stratagem could have been carried out with the simple 26…♕xf5; e.g., 27.♕xf5 ♘xf5 28.♘h5 ♖ge8! 29.♖c1 ♘e3 30.♘xf6 ♖e6. If we now compare the resulting position with that shown in the previous diagram, it must be granted that the unblocking of the d4-pawn has to be seen as a clear plus for Black. It will be noted, further, that the centralization has assumed the character of an endgame, without having lost any of its intensity. There could follow, for example, (30…♖e6) 31.♘d7+ ♔a8 32.♘c5 ♖c6 33.♘d3 ♖xc1+ 34.♘xc1 d3! 35.♘b3 (or 35.♖d2? ♖f8!; if 35.♘xd3, then 35…a6! 36.♖d2 ♘g4! and wins) 35…♘c4 36.♘d2 ♘xb2 37.♖f4 b5, followed by …♘c4, winning. For this reason, 26…♕xf5 was the right move, which would have permitted an effortless and comfortable transition into the endgame (with passed-on centralization!). After the move chosen (26…♕c6), complete clarification cannot be achieved without additional effort.



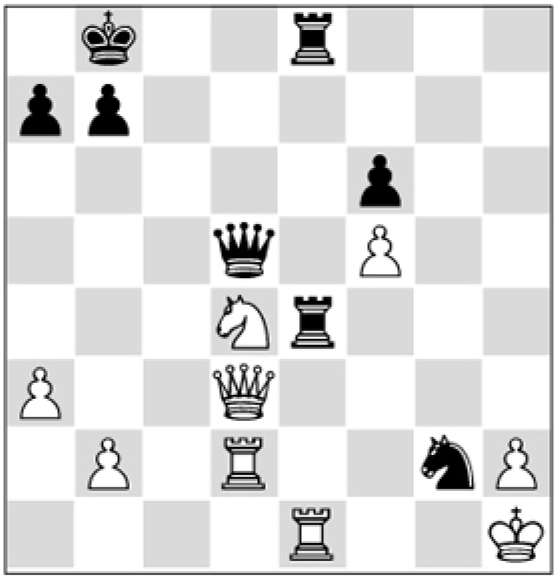
27.♘g6

Correct was 27.♔g1, inasmuch as now Black could have won outright by means of the following elegant combination: 27…h3! 28.♘e7 ♕c7! 29.♘xg8 ♘g4! 30.♕g3 ♕xg3 31.hxg3 ♘xf2+ 32.♔g1 ♘d3 33.♖d1 h2+! 34.♔xh2 ♘f2 35.♖f1 ♘g4+ and 36…♖xg8. On the other hand, after 27.♔g1! it would not have been so easy for Black to show a clear advantage; e.g., 27…♖g4 28.♕e2 (28.♖xe3? ♕c1+) 28…♖dg8 29.♘g6 ♖4xg6 30.fxg6 ♖xg6 31.♕d2 ♕e4, when Black has an imposing position, certainly, but also has middlegame obligations that in the long run are not altogether desirable.

27…♖de8?

A mistake in time pressure. Black was playing three games simultaneously and therefore had to play three-times-twenty moves per hour. With 27…h3 he could have won easily, as already indicated.

28.♘xh4 ♖g4 29.♘f3 ♕d5 30.♖d2 ♖ge4 31.♘xd4 ♘xg2

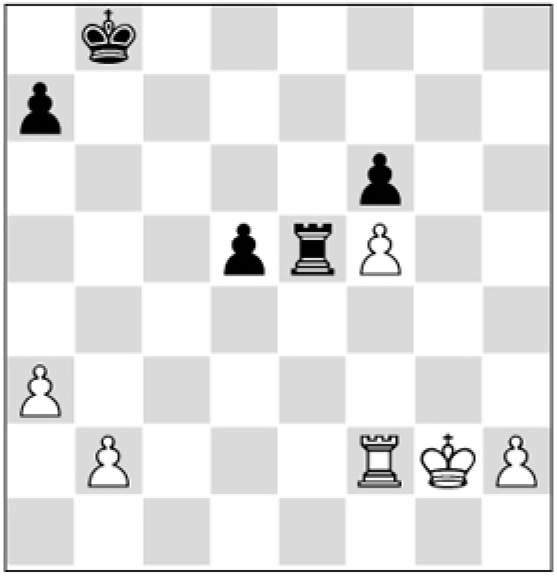


This should no longer have availed him; after his mistake on the 27th move the game just cannot be held – but matters turn out differently.

32.♖xe4 ♖xe4 33.♘c6+!

This is still clearer than 33.♘f3 ♕xd3 34.♖xd3 ♘e3 35.♖d4! ♖e8 36.♔g1 and 37.♔f2.

33…bxc6 34.♕xd5 cxd5 35.♔xg2 ♖e5 36.♖f2



This one weak move gives Black’s centralization, as it were smoldering under the coals, the chance to flare up again. Correct was 36.h4; if 36…♖xf5, then 37.♖f2 ♖h5 38.♔h3 f5 39.♖d2, or 36…♔c7 37.♔g3 ♔d6 38.h5 ♖xf5 39.♖h2 ♖g5+ 40.♔f4 ♔e6 41.h6 ♖g8 42.h7 ♖h8 43.b4 and White wins.

36…♚c7 37.♚g3 ♚d6 38.♚g4 ♜e4+ 39.♚h5

Or 39.♖f4? ♔e5 40.♖xe4+ ♔xe4 and wins.

39…d4 40.♚g6 ♚e5 41.b4 ♜g4+ 42.♚f7 ♜f4 43.♜xf4?

A gross blunder, of course, but the game was lost in any case.

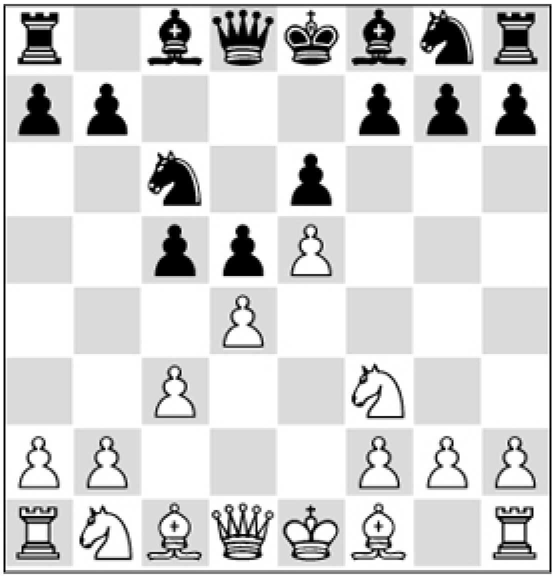
43…♚xf4 44.♚xf6 d3 45.♚g6 d2 46.f6 d1♛

and Black won.

Game 8

Aron Nimzowitsch
Grigory Levenfish
Karlsbad 1911 (19)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3



5…f6

Strategically unsound – a pawn chain should be attacked at its base (here, d4). Correct therefore was 5…♕b6 6.♗e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗d7, with pressure against d4.

6.♝b5 ♝d7 7.0-0 ♛b6

Not 7…♘xe5 because of 8.♘xe5 ♗xb5 9.♕h5+ ♔e7 10.♕f7+ ♔d6 11.dxc5+ ♔xe5 12.♖e1+ ♔f5 13.♕h5+ g5 14.g4#.

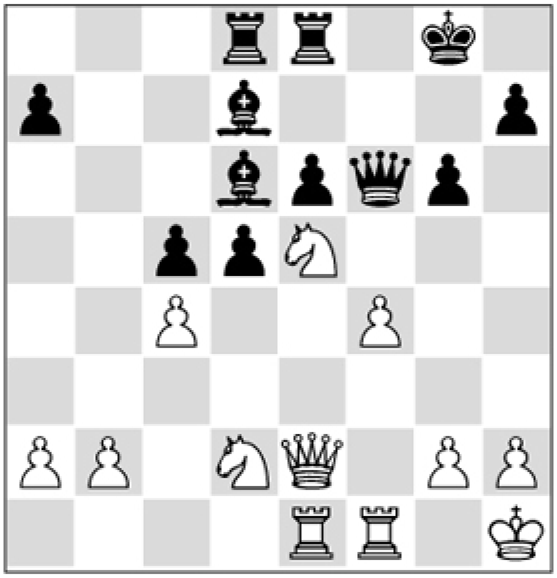
8.♝xc6 bxc6 9.exf6 ♞xf6

Here I would have preferred 9…gxf6.

10.♞e5 ♝d6 11.dxc5 ♝xc5 12.♝g5!

This move, which leads to the complete blockade of the black pawn center, forms the purpose of White's method of play from moves 8 through 12.

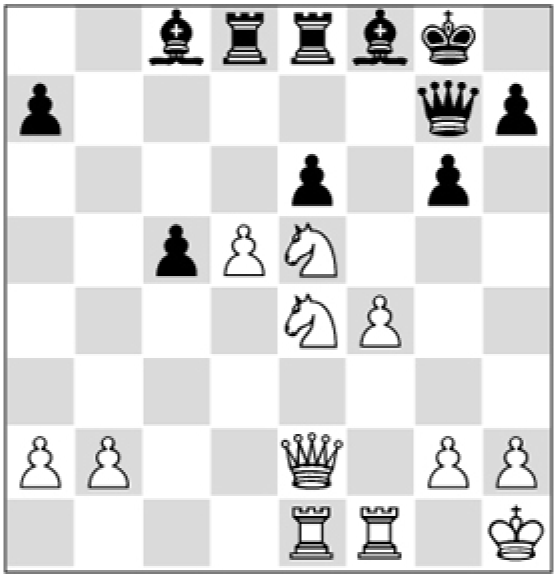
12…♛d8 13.♝xf6 ♛xf6 14.♛h5+ g6 15.♛e2 ♜d8 16.♞d2 0-0 17.♜ae1 ♜fe8 18.♚h1 ♝d6 19.f4 c5 20.c4



20…♝f8

It is never easy to bridge the gap between the always subtly furtive blockade play on the one hand and attacking play that looks the opponent straight in the eye. Today, I think this could perhaps have been accomplished most easily with 20.♕a6; e.g., 20…♗b8 21.♘b3 ♕e7 22.♘a5, or 20…♕e7 21.♘df3!, when White threatens to follow up with either ♕xa7 or ♘g5, according to circumstances. After 20.c4 ♗f8 Black drops a pawn, but this loss is in fact rather agreeable to him, for now his bishops come into their own and White will not find it easy to suddenly re-arrange his game, which has been set up for blockade.

21.cxd5 ♝c8 22.♘e4 ♛g7



23.dxe6

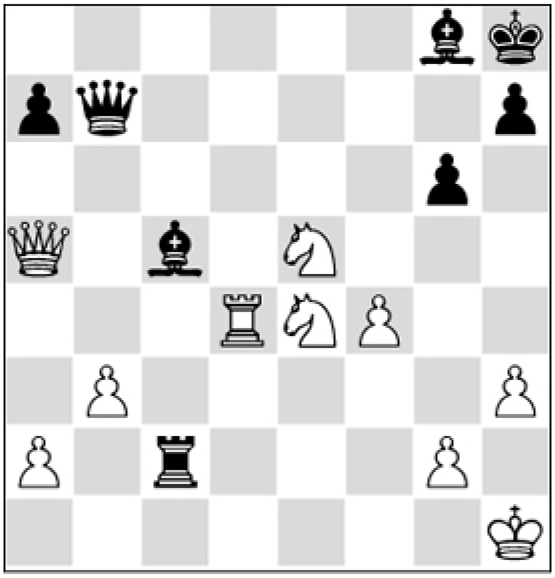
With 23.d6! White could have avoided the need for any re-arrangement, but I wanted to ‘savor’ the sacrificed pawn. The move 23.d6 would have won easily.

23…♝xe6 24.♛a6 ♚h8 25.♜d1 ♝g8 26.b3 ♜d4! 27.♜xd4 cxd4 28.♛a5

White takes care not to provoke the powerful bishops by any diversion of the knight (♘g5). With the text move he prevents 28…♖d8 but grants his opponent’s possession of the c-file. The struggle now becomes quite dramatic.

28…♜c8 29.♜d1 ♜c2 30.h3 ♛b7 31.♜xd4 ♝c5

Now Black’s attack would seem to be overwhelming.



32.♕d8!!

With the surprising point 32…♗xd4 33.♕xd4 ♕g7 (anything else is worse) 34.♘d6!! and 35.♘e8, with an immediate win. I ask, is the existence of this saving clause to be attributed to chance? No, for the whole procedure is typical. If your opponent has understood how to make your central blockade inoperative through the sacrifice of a pawn, then you should sit pretty in the center and wait for any opportunity that presents itself to make a *central blocking diagonal* the basis of a counter-sacrifice. This counter-sacrifice will then be of decisive effect.

32…♗e7 33.♕d7 ♕a6 34.♖d3

In order to play ♕d4 – again, the blockading diagonal d4-h8.

34…♗f8 35.♘f7+ ♗xf7

Or 35…♔g7 36.♕d4+ and mate in two moves.

36.♕xf7 ♖c8

A complete débâcle.

37.♖d7

1-0

This game consists of two parts:

1) A central blockade, carried out with surprising turns;

2) An interesting repulse of an enemy attempt to blast open this blockade by violent means.

The first part of the game, at the time it was played, was unexplored territory; the second part still is.

4. We become familiar in greater depth with the central terrain; a few combined forms of centralization

Games 9 – 15

In Game 9 we encounter a central terrain familiar to us from Game 7. But here (in contrast to Game 7) the blockader is brought down by *direct* assault. In Game 10 we see a quite original central build-up, while in Game 11 the striking feature is the ‘deep stratification’ of the central kernel.

That a central position (Game 7) can acutely effect points far away on the wings would appear to be founded on the nature of centralization. But in some instances this more or less *automatic* ‘radiation’ of the attack does not suffice and it proves much more desirable to *build up* an attack on the wing along with the central attack. Such a procedure is illustrated in Game 12. That it is not absolutely necessary to give this ‘added-on’ play the character of a diversionary *attack* becomes a matter of conviction after a look at Game 13, the additional play in this case being of a strictly defensive nature.

It is germane to the present discussion to point out that this combined play (in the center and on the wing simultaneously) places great demands on the robustness of one’s overall set-up. Viewed in this light, the collapse of the combined action in Game 14 is readily understandable – his own queenside proved to be weak. In conclusion, we present the quite exciting Game 15, seeking, through in-depth supporting analysis, to define the maximum that can be achieved from a central build-up.

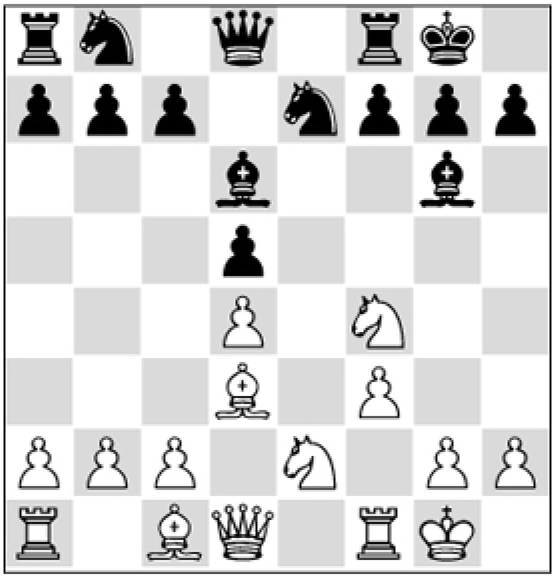
Game 9

Frederick Yates
Aron Nimzowitsch
Semmering 1926 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♗d3 ♘e7 6.♘e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♗g4 8.f3 ♗h5

A small weakness has resulted at e3, which, however, can only be revealed by the somewhat risky-looking …c7-c5.

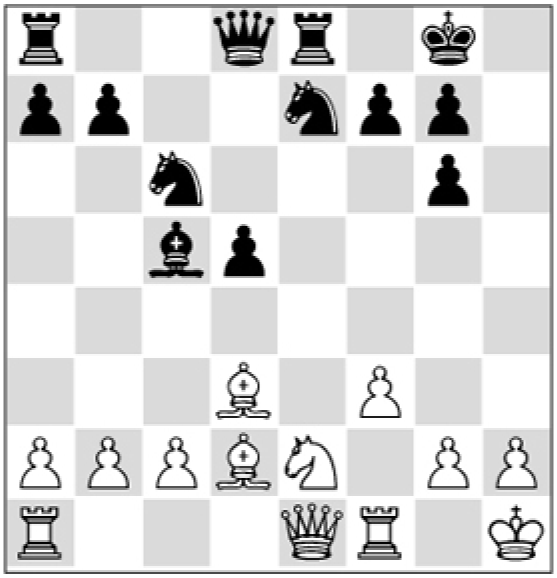
9.♘f4 ♗g6 10.♘ce2 ♗d6



11.♕e1

This can be classified under ‘neglect of the central complex’. Our ‘central focus’ clearly points to 11.♗xg6 and 12.♘d3, when the central squares c5 and e5 would appear to be fixed.

11…c5 12.dxc5 ♗xc5+ 13.♔h1 ♘bc6 14.♗d2 ♖e8 15.♘xg6 hxg6



16.f4

A flank attack with an inferior central position! Relatively best, instead, seems 16.♕h4 ♘f5 17.♕xd8 ♖axd8, with only a slight endgame advantage for Black.

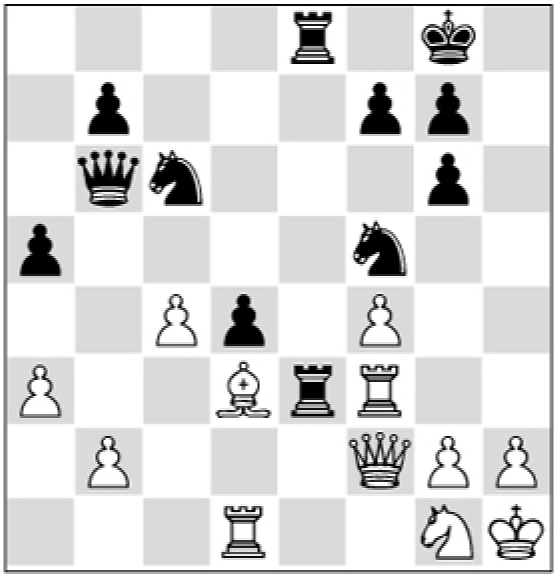
16…♘f5 17.c3 d4 18.c4 ♕b6

Black clearly stands better.

19.♖f3 ♗b4!

Taking control of the e3-square for his own pieces.

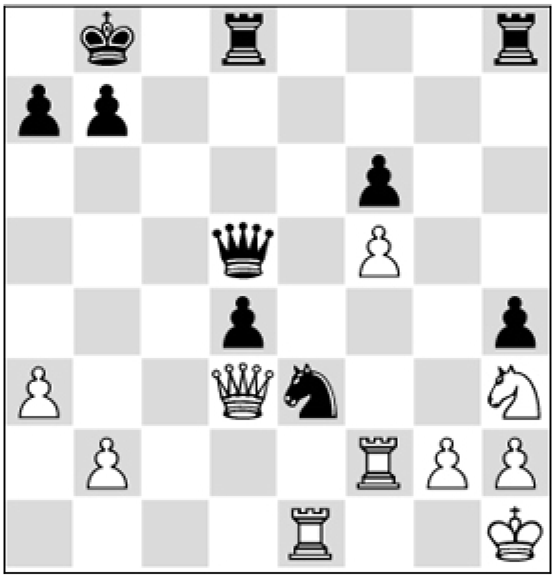
20.a3 ♗xd2 21.♕xd2 a5 22.♘g1 ♖e3 23.♕f2 ♖ae8 24.♖d1



The central territory here reminds us of the position known to us in Game 7. There, as here, Black’s pawn on d4 forms the kernel of his centralized action; logically connected with it are the e3-square and the associated e-file. And in both games Black’s central pressure leads (or should lead) to the removal of the white blockader at d3.

24…♕b3 25.♖d2 ♘d6 26.c5 ♘c4 27.♗xc4 ♕xc4

It is accomplished – the blockader has fallen! The student might now proceed as follows. On a second board he should set up the position from Game 7:



(position from Game 7, after 25.f5!)

and add the moves 25…♖hg8 26.♘f4. He should then study the note to the 26th move. This done, he should take the opportunity to compare this note with the course of events in the present game, moves 24 through 27. After that he should try to comprehend and clearly define the difference in strategy applied in each case. Our formulation can be found at the end of this game.

28.♖c2 ♕d5 29.♖c1 ♕e4

Now, the following continuation (among others) is already in the air: 30…♖xf3 31.♕xf3 ♕xf3 32.♘xf3 ♖e2, with a decisive occupation of the 2nd rank.

30.f5

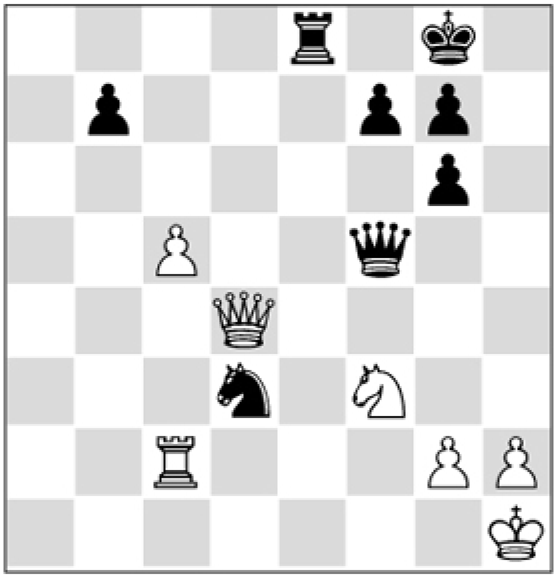
A spirited attempt to save himself.

30…♜xf3 31.♞xf3 ♛xf5 32.b4 axb4 33.axb4 ♞xb4

Not bad also is the continuation 33… ♘e5; e.g., 34.♖e1 ♖e6.

34.♛xd4 ♞d3 35.♜c2

Not 35.♖c3 because of 35…♖e1+ followed by …♕f1+ and …♘f2#.



35…♜c8!

Tempting, but not good, was 35…♘e1, in view of 36.♖e2!! ♖xe2 37.♕d8+ ♔h7 38.♘g5+ ♔h6 39.♘xf7+ ♔h5 40.♕h8+, when the sequence 41.♕h3+, 42.♕g3+, and 43.♘d6+ wins the queen.

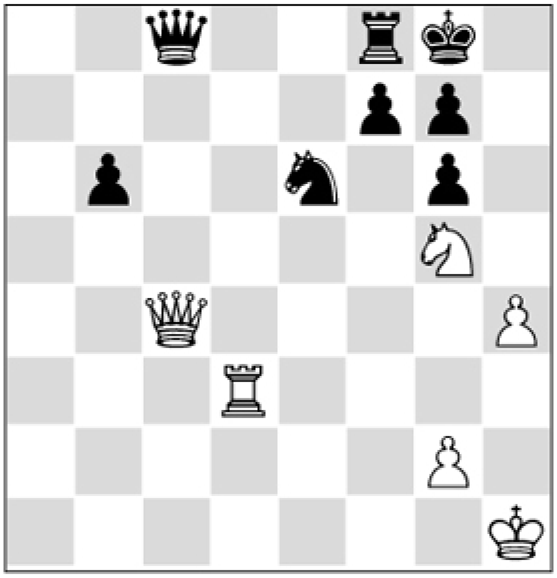
36.♜c3 ♞xc5

We can see clearly that Black’s moves 34 through 37 are to be understood as a centralizing maneuver based on the central diagonal f5-b1. The rest is a matter of technique (the technique of the ‘frog position’ – the strategic retreat – especially).

37.h4 b6 38.♞g5 ♜f8!

No false shame: this retreat is only temporary.

39.♜f3 ♛d7 40.♛c4 ♞e6 41.♜d3 ♛c8



42.♕b5

The rook ending after 42.♕xc8 ♖xc8 43.♘xe6 fxe6 44.♖d6 ♖b8 45.♖xe6 ♔f7 would be hopeless for White.

42...♕c1+ 43.♔h2 ♕f4+ 44.g3 ♕f2+ 45.♔h1 ♕f1+ 46.♔h2 ♘c5

White resigned.

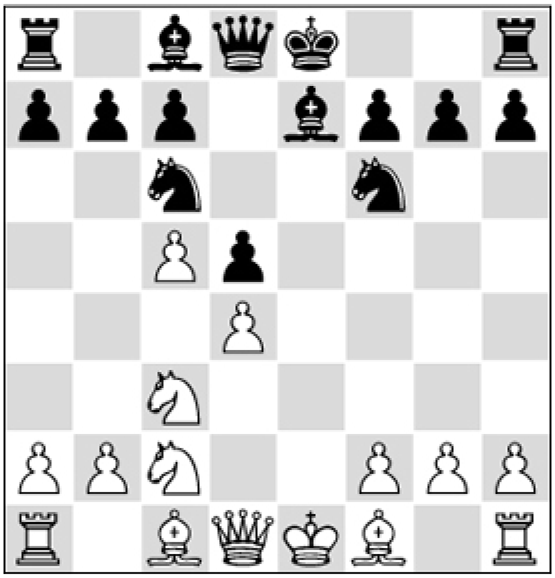
N.B. Answer to the question posed in the note after move 27: in Game 9, the blockader falls in the course of the *defense*; in Game 7, the blockader is removed in the course of an *attack* he felt he was compelled to undertake. White’s attack in Game 7 can be taken as involuntary, since otherwise they would have been crushed by the enemy ‘central tank’ (and its resultant effect on g2). This ability to *compel* the decentralized opponent to engage in a *premature* flank attack is in the highest degree characteristic of a powerfully centralized position.

Game 10

Richard Réti
Aron Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925 (14)

The introductory moves lead through hypermodern-looking byways to a pawn configuration well known to us from the French Exchange Variation.

1.c4 e5 2.♘f3 e4 3.♘d4 ♘c6 4.♘c2 ♝c5 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.d4 exd3 7.exd3 d5 8.d4 ♝e7 9.c5



Played in enterprising blockade style.

9…♝f5

An attempt to break open the blockade with 9…b6 would have been premature; e.g., 10.b4 a5 11.b5 and c5-c6.

10.♝d3

The natural follow-up would have been 10.♗b5 and possibly ♗xc6.

10…♝xd3 11.♕xd3 b6

Now this is appropriate!

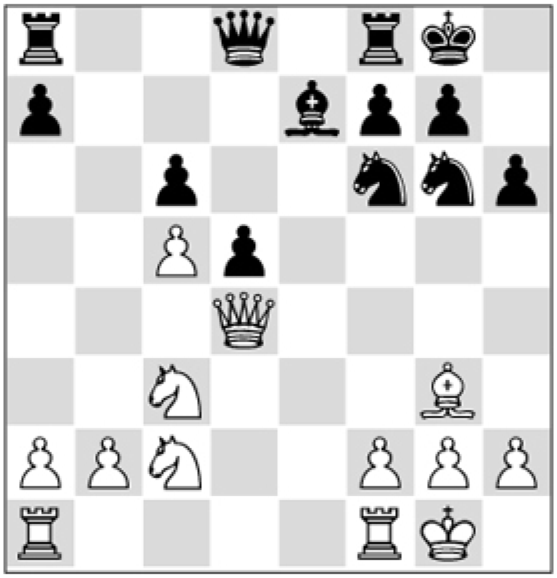
12.0-0

Now, 12.b4 a5 13.b5 fails to 13…♘b4, winning a tempo.

12…0-0

12…bxc5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 does not work because of 14.♕b5.

13.♝g5! h6! 14.♝h4 bxc5 15.dxc5 ♘e5 16.♕d4 ♘g6 17.♝g3 c6

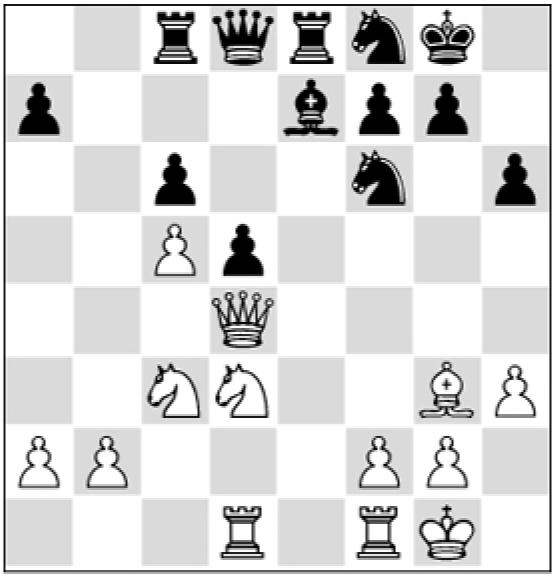


Black has a good d-pawn (which is poorly blockaded) and the possibility of attacking the c5-pawn. In return for this, control of the g3-b8 diagonal does not seem to me to offer a full equivalent. White should have played 10.♗b5 after all.

18.♘b4 ♖c8 19.h3 ♖e8

Black is making room for the knight and at the same time beginning to occupy the central file, which his opponent cannot contest because of his worries at c5.

20.♖ad1 ♘f8 21.♘d3



21…♕a5

I saw that after this move 22.♕a4 was forced. In this event of this reply I had worked out a highly original centralizing maneuver.

22.♕a4

Bad would be 22.b4 ♕a3 23.♖b1 ♘e6 24.♕e5 ♘d7 25.♕e1 ♘exc5 26.bxc5 ♗f6.

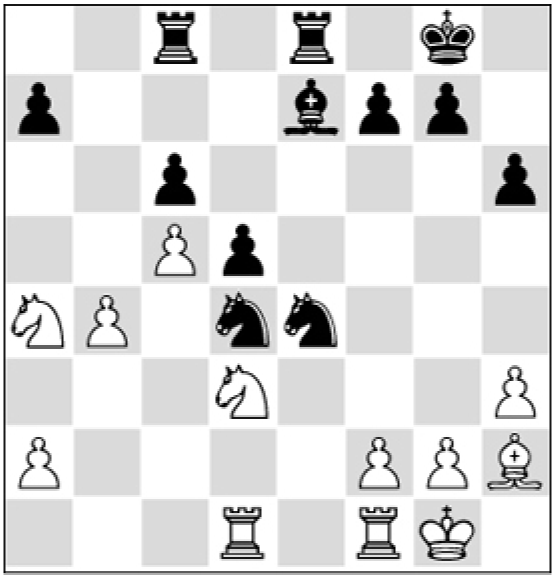
22…♕xa4 23.♘xa4 ♘e4

Now the knight occupies the center that has been freed up after the deflection of the antagonist.

24.♗h2 ♘e6

What does he want? The c5-pawn is easy to defend!

25.b4 ♘d4!



Quite unusual support! Two knights, of which one can be driven away (with f2-f3) and the other is unprotected – yet they control the board.

26.♖fe1

26.f3? ♘e2+ and …♘2g3+.

26…♗h4!

A third piece in league with the knights.

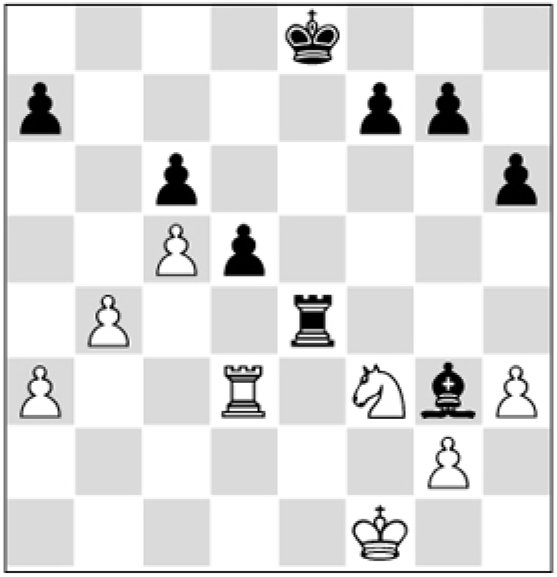
27.♗e5

White was in a difficult situation. The text loses a pawn.

27…♖xe5 28.♘xe5 ♗xf2+ 29.♔f1 ♗xe1 30.♖xd4 ♗g3 31.♘f3 ♖e8 32.♖d1 ♖e6 33.♖c1 ♔f8

The king goes over to the wing that is under threat.

34.♘c3 ♘xc3 35.♖xc3 ♖e4 36.a3 ♔e8 37.♖d3

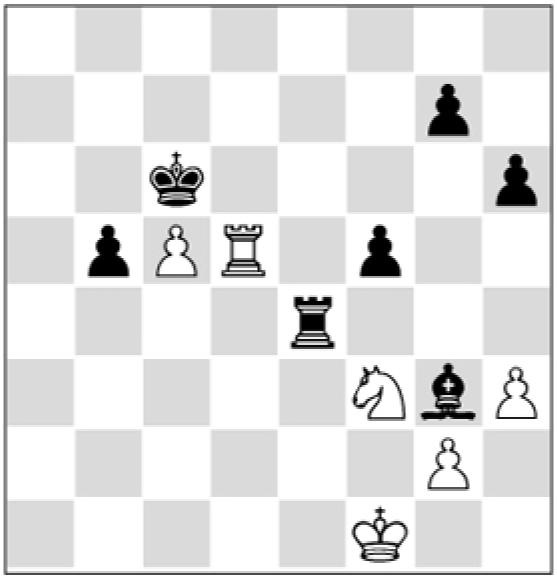


A fine move that, on 37…♔d7, prepares 38.b5.

37…a6 38.♖d4 f5 39.a4 ♔d7 40.b5

This founders on a subtle and study-like finesse.

40…axb5 41.axb5 cxb5 42.♖xd5+ ♔c6!!



On analogy with Game 1 – the extra material is returned with thanks.

43.♖d4

Or 43.♖xf5 b4, etc.

43…♔xc5

And Black won:

44.♖xe4 fxe4 45.♘d2 ♔d4 46.♔e2 ♗f4 47.♘b3+ ♔c4 48.♘a5+ ♔c3 49.♘b7 b4 50.♘c5 ♔c2 51.g3 ♗xg3

0-1

Game 11

Grigory Levenfish
Aron Nimzowitsch
Vilnius 1912

1.e4 c6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.exd5 exd5 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♗b5+ ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗d6

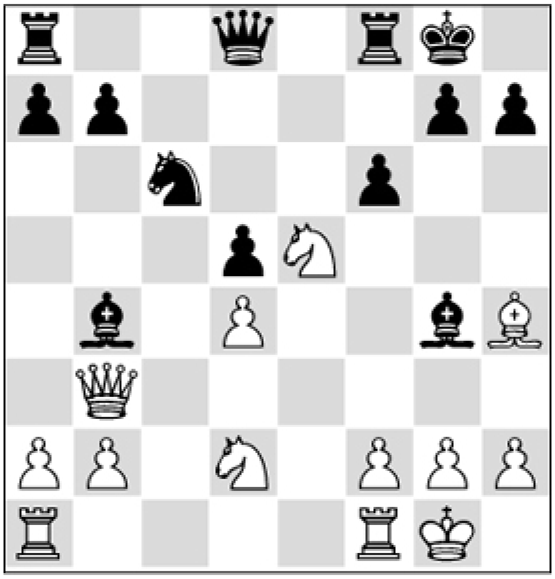
This permits the undisturbed development of all Black’s forces.

8.d4 ♘e7 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗h4 0-0 11.♘bd2 ♗g4 12.♗xc6 ♘xc6 13.♕b3 ♗b4

Reducing *ad absurdum* White’s attempts to demonstrate the looseness of his opponent’s build-up.

14.♘e5

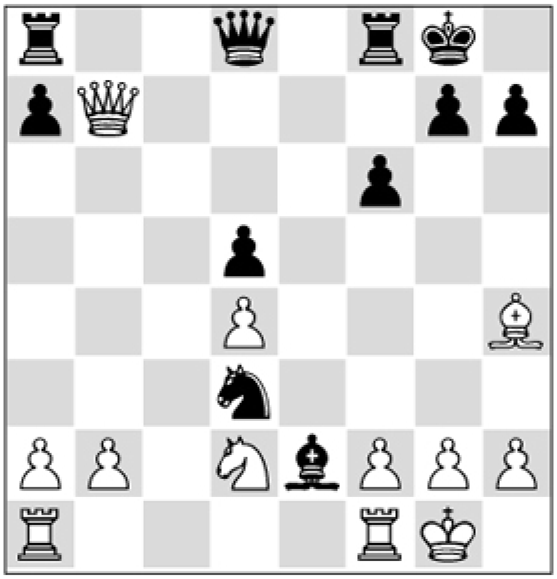
Directed against the threatened …♕b6.



14…♘xe5

The continuation 14…♗xd2 15.♘xg4 g5 16.♗g3 f5 17.♕xb7 ♕c8 would fail to the piquant 18.♗e5!, 18…♘xe5 19.♕xc8 and ♘xe5 to follow, with an extra pawn – even if it can hardly be realized.

15.♕xb4 ♘d3! 16.♕xb7 ♗e2



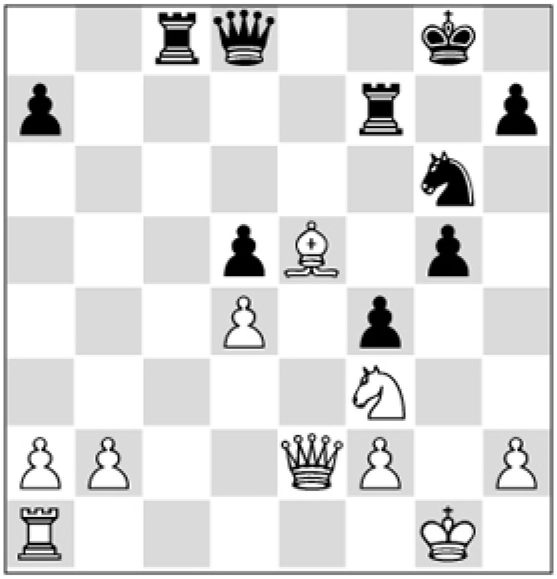
17.♖fb1 ♖c8

The centralization carried out in the heart of the enemy position is not without its humorous overtones.

18.♘f1 g5 19.♗g3 f5 20.♗e5 ♖f7 21.♕a6 f4 22.♖e1

Rebelling against his fate, for 22.f3 ♖c2 strikes him as unbearable. Just as hopeless as the move played is the try 22.♖d1.

22…♘xe1 23.♕xe2 ♘xg2 24.♘d2 ♘h4 25.♘f3 ♘g6



Consolidating by concentrating the retreating force – which after a successful raiding variation seems particularly advisable, inasmuch as moves aimed at plunder often have a slightly disorganizing effect (the pieces become scattered).

26.♚h1 g4 27.♘d2 ♛d7 28.♖g1 ♜c2

And now this!

29.h3 g3

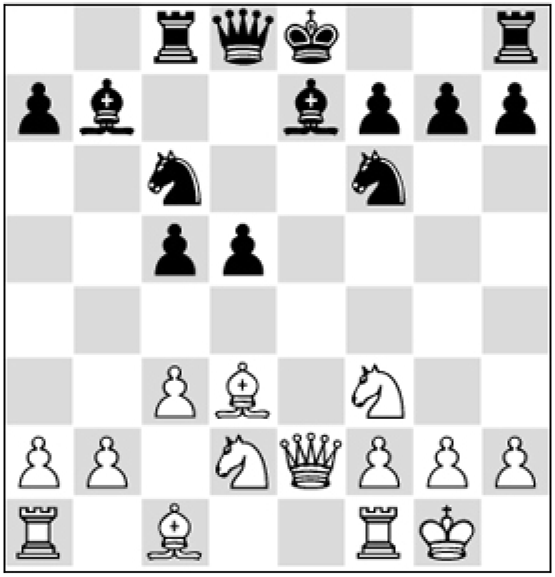
0-1

An amusing little game!

Game 12

Savielly Tartakower
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927 (9)

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 ♞f6 3.e3 b6 4.♗d3 ♝b7 5.♘bd2 c5 6.0-0 ♞c6 7.c3 ♜c8 8.♕e2 ♝e7 9.dxc5 bxc5 10.e4 d5 11.exd5 exd5

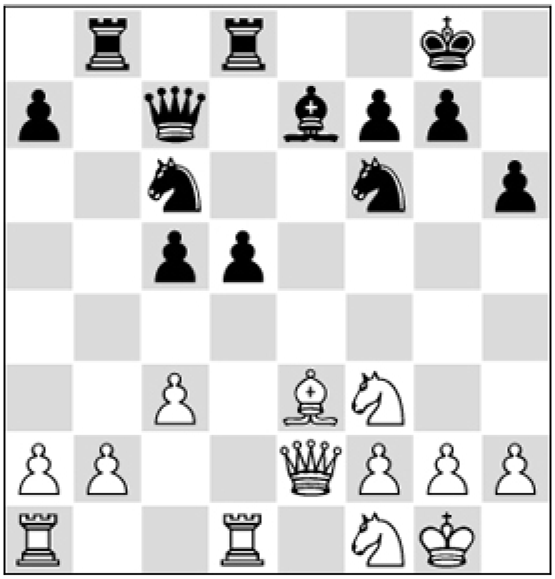


Black has arranged his game along original lines (moves 8 through 11). The game looks about even, but in this position Black already has a few shares of preferred stock (even if they are as yet barely perceptible) in the central domain.

12.♗a6 ♗xa6 13.♕xa6 0-0 14.♖d1 ♕c7 15.♘f1 ♖b8 16.♕e2 ♖fd8

Black rejects 16…♖fe8, for what matters more than anything here is the consolidation of his position. The valuable d-pawn rightly calls for an escort worthy of it!

17.♗e3 h6!

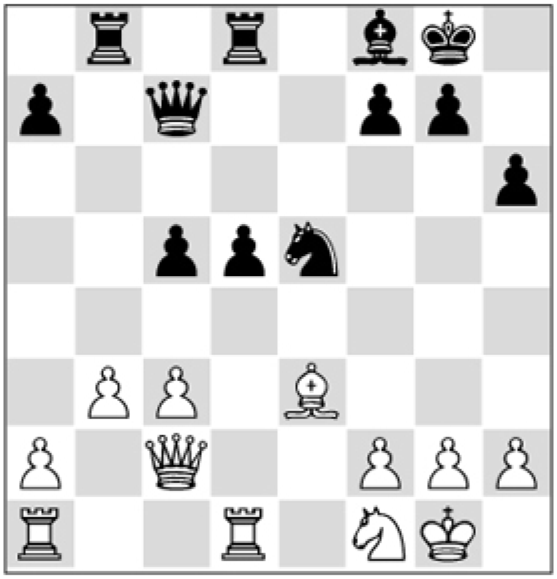


Centralization tactics: I am planning to take almost all the central squares from my opponent. His only central square, f5, is effectively cancelled out, for on ♘f1-g3-f5 Black would simply play …♗f8 and White would have no suitable attacking continuation, since ♗g5 has been ruled out.

18.♘g3 ♗f8 19.♕c2 ♘g4

Black is in pursuit of central points (e5).

20.♘f1 ♘ce5 21.♘xe5 ♘xe5 22.b3



22…a5!

The attack built up from the centralization!

23.♖d2 c4

Another, possibly still ‘sounder’ way of playing was …♖d7, …♖bd8, and …a5-a4. If then bxa4, then …♘c4 and the subsequent penetration of the rooks down the b-file.

24.bxc4

A better defense was afforded by 24.♖ad1, and if 24…♘d3, then White sacrifices the exchange on d3.

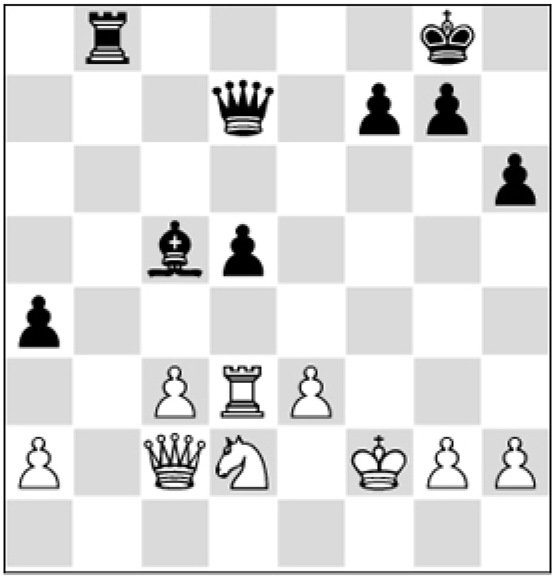
24…♘xc4 25.♖d3 a4!

By means of …a4-a3 an important point of entry is to be created at b2.

26.♘d2 ♘xe3! 27.fxe3

If 27.♖xe3 d4 28.♖d3 ♗b4, White would be in even more danger.

27…♛a7 28.♜b1 ♜xb1+ 29.♛xb1 ♝c5 30.♚f2 ♜b8 31.♛c2 ♛d7



White’s weaknesses, namely, the pawn on e3, the b2-square, and the somewhat vulnerable king position are now dealt with in a workmanlike manner (see ‘The Technique of Alternation’ in Part V).

32.♞f3

32.c4? d4!.

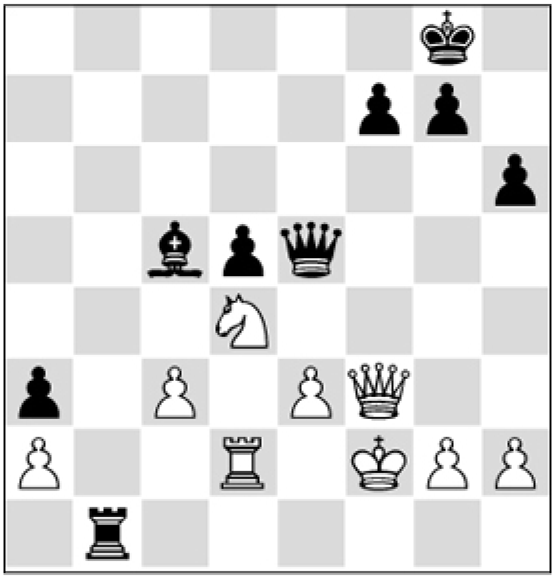
32…♛e6 33.♛e2

33.♕xa4? ♗xe3+!.

33…a3!

At last!

34.♜d2 ♜b1 35.♞d4 ♛f6+ 36.♛f3 ♛e5



Now Black’s position has reached its apex, both centrally and ‘sideways’. For what could be more ‘central’ than e5, and what could compete in outflanking power with an infiltrating rook that has taken control of the eighth rank, and also even potentially the seventh?

37.g3

A mistake that should have been immediately fatal, but one that Black fails to exploit. The only possible move at this point is 37.♕g3, after which there would have followed 37…♗xd4 38.cxd4 ♕e6, when some resistance, however feeble, would still be possible for White. A plausible line would be 39.♕c7 (anticipating …♕c6) 39…♕a6 40.♕d8+ ♔h7 41.♕xd5 ♕f1+ 42.♔g3 ♖b2 and wins. To be noted here is the decisive contribution made by the a3-pawn.

37…♝xd4?

Here, 37…♖c1 won immediately. If in reply 38.♘e2, then 38…♗xe3+; but after 38.♘c6, 38…♕xc3 (the simplest) and wins.

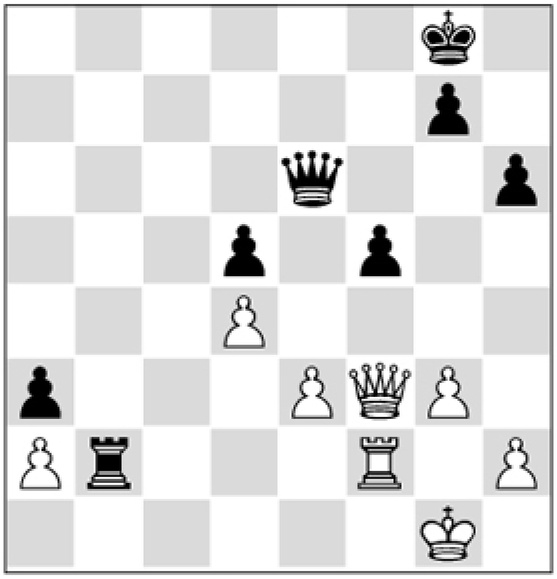
38.cxd4 ♛e6 39.♚g2

Enabling ♖f2 and some counterplay along the f-file, but White’s game nevertheless cannot be held.

39…♜b2

Black’s main trump card!

40.♜f2 f5 41.♚g1



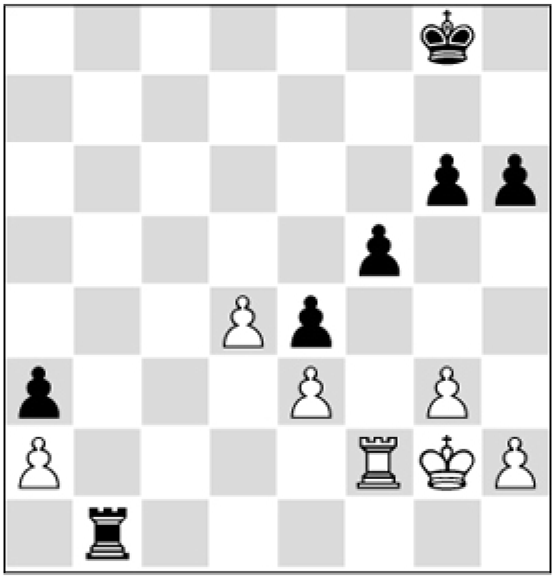
41…♜b1+

Time pressure. Correct was 41…♔h7 42.♔g2 (the f-pawn cannot be taken; e.g., 42.♕xf5+? ♕xf5 43.♖xf5 ♖xa2 44.♖xd5 ♖b2, forcing the a-pawn through) 42…♔g6 43.♔g1 ♕e4, winning in a manner similar to the game.

42.♚g2 g6

This direct protection of the f-pawn is in the long run less strong than the indirect method pointed out in the previous note.

43.♛f4 ♛e4+ 44.♛xe4 dxe4



45.♖e2

Now Black's clock is running properly again; after 45.g4 it would have stopped altogether. For example, 45…fxg4 46.♖f6 ♖b2+ 47.♔g3! (certainly not the first rank!) and White need not lose. We can now see that this salvation from heaven would normally never have been possible, for after 41…♔h7 and 42…♔g6 Black would have been able to trade off the queens and White would have been unable to break through in any way.

45…♚f7

There now follows a concluding phase delightful in its simplicity, a model example of the special case treated in *My System*: the 'absolute' seventh in conjunction with a passed pawn almost always wins. (We call 'absolute' those cases where the rook on the seventh helps confine the opposing king to the eighth rank.)

46.♚f2 ♚e6 47.♜d2 ♚d5 48.♚e2 ♜b2

The sealed move; Black foresaw the whole of the ensuing breakthrough.

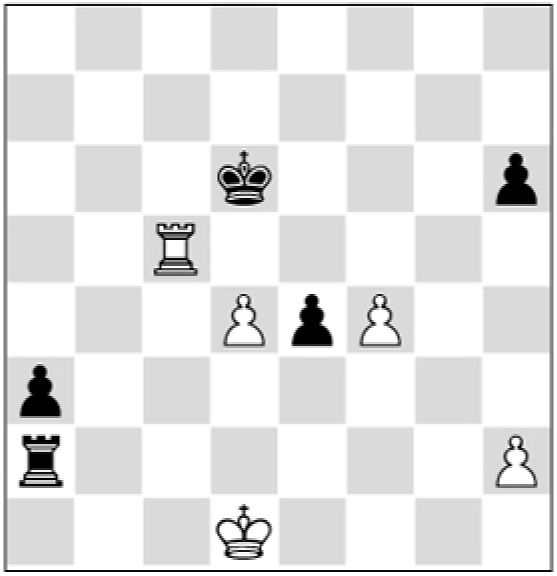
49.♚d1

Threatening to annihilate the annoying invader at b2.

49…g5

The relief effort from the other wing. On 50.♖xb2 axb2 51.♔c2 f4 White is lost.

50.♜c2 f4 51.gxf4 gxf4 52.♜c5+ ♚d6 53.exf4 ♜xa2



Now we have the ‘absolute’ seventh rank plus a passed pawn.

54.♖a5 e3 55.♔e1 ♜a1+ 56.♔e2 a2 57.f5 ♜h1 58.♔xe3 a1♕ 59.♖xa1 ♜xa1 60.♔f4 ♜g1 61.h3 ♚d5 62.h4 h5 63.f6 ♚e6 64.f7 ♜g4+ 65.♔f3 ♚xf7

0-1

Despite the omission on the 41st move the main idea stands out clearly: the combination of central pressure and the outflanking maneuver. An instructive example!

Game 13

Friedrich Sämisch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Berlin 1928 (12)

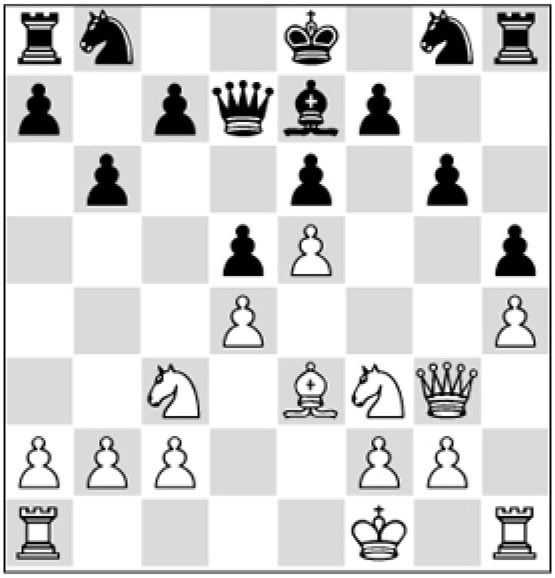
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♞f6 4.♗g5 ♝e7 5.e5 ♞g8

With this ill-reputed move Black introduces a new and noteworthy battle plan.

6.♗e3 b6

The point: Black plans to exchange White’s light-squared bishop with …♗a6.

7.♕g4 g6 8.h4 h5 9.♕g3 ♝a6 10.♘f3 ♝xf1 11.♔xf1 ♛d7



Black now threatens, *inter alia*, the diversion …♕c6 followed by …b6-b5-b4. We note in passing that for White the squares c2, c4, and b5 labor under a certain weakness. This was the reason for trading off the white bishop.

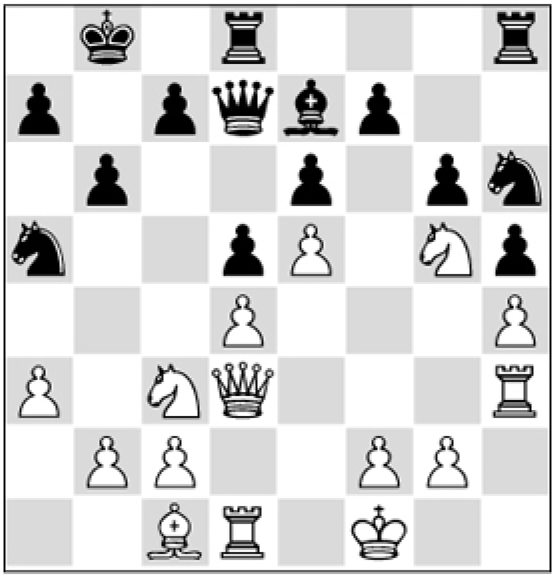
12.a3 ♘c6

Black can be content with the success of the queen diversion (to d7): a3 is after all a weakness for White.

13.♖d1

He defends his position prophylactically, lending interest to the game. Sämisch, incidentally, belongs to that small group of players who fight for the central squares. He is altogether a player gifted with brilliant strategical ability.

13…♘a5 14.♘g5 ♘h6 15.♗c1 0-0-0 16.♕d3 ♔b8 17.♖h3



White’s position now comes across as well consolidated, for the danger involved in …♘c4 may be regarded as having been localized in advance. And on 17…c5 there are always defensive chances with 18.dxc5 (based on the d-file) and, what is most important, the knight on g5 – which can never be traded off without giving the recapturing bishop a splendid diagonal – keeps Black’s entire kingside under pressure.

17…♜df8

As will be seen shortly, this move is not without its venom.

18.♚g1

He underestimates the danger; the rook had to go to f3 at once, for after Black’s reply its retreat is blocked. On 18.♖f3!, 18…♘f5 would have come all the same; then 19.g3 f6 20.exf6 ♗xf6 (threatening 21…♘c6 followed by …e6-e5) 21.♖e1! ♖e8! 22.♖f4! ♗xg5 (*not* 22…e5 because of the exchange sacrifice 23.dxe5 ♗xe5 24.♘xd5 ♗xf4 25.♗xf4) 23.hxg5 ♘c6, when Black would have some advantage in view of the possibility of the breakthrough at e5. The opening was simply in Black’s favor.

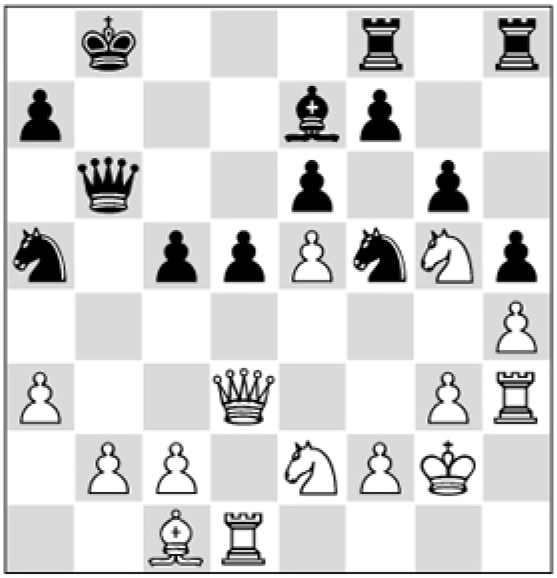
18…♞f5 19.♞e2 ♛d8!

Now 19…f6 would be less strong because of 20.♘f3.

20.g3

Black was threatening 21…♘xh4 (cf. the first part of the note to move 18).

20…c5 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♚g2 ♛b6



The idea behind this is to conduct a sustained attack on the e-pawn until White plays f2-f4; then …♗xg5 is to be played at last, when the bishop at c1 can no longer recapture and the problem of the g5-knight seems to have been solved!

23.f4

This needn't have been played now, but Sämisch, for whom consolidation is a psychological necessity, cannot bear the sight of unprotected pawns.

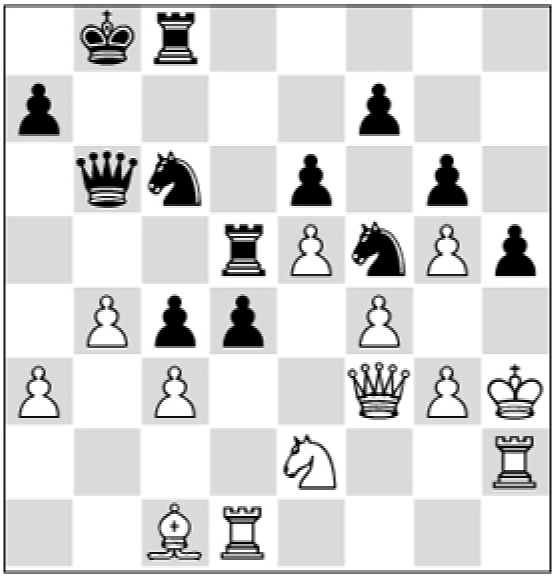
23…♝xg5 24.hxg5 ♜c8 25.♜h2 ♜hd8

The rooks, now available, demonstrate a veritable hunger for work.

26.♚h3 d4

A gradual advance of the central pawn mass, accompanied by a step-by-step centralization of the supporting pieces.

27.♛f3 ♜d5 28.b3 c4! 29.b4 ♞c6 30.c3



30…d3

With this move a fine and apparently sound combination is underway; and yet, from the practical standpoint it would have been more advisable to give preference to a strategy of simplification that we have illustrated on numerous occasions. Without any special effort, Black would have been able to preserve some of the advantages of centralization into the endgame, and indeed as follows: 30…♖cd8 31.cxd4 ♘cxd4 32.♘xd4 ♘xd4. Now 33.♕e4 (counter-centralization) would fail to 33…♘f5, while the move 33.♕f2 would lead to 33…♘b3; e.g., 34.♗e3 ♕b7, with an overwhelming positional superiority.

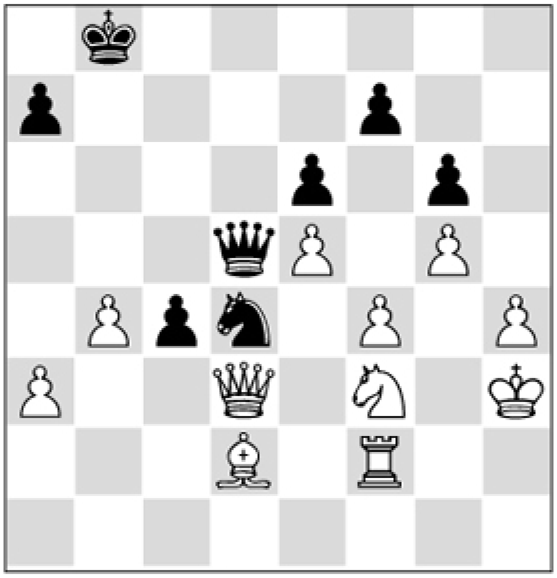
31.♞g1 d2 32.♜hxd2 ♜xd2 33.♝xd2 ♜d8 34.♛e2

If 34.♗c1, then 34…♖xd1 35.♕xd1 ♕f2 36.♘e2 ♔c8 37.♕a4 ♕f3 and wins, or 37.a4 ♘ce7 followed by …♘d5 and …♘de3, with an immediate win.

34…♜d3 35.♞f3 ♛d8 36.♜f1 ♛d5 37.♜f2 h4

The triumph of the middlegame centralizing idea we have been stressing. White now loses the queen.

38.gxh4 ♞cd4 39.cxd4 ♞xd4 40.♛xd3



He has nothing better. Black should win the ending easily, but fatigue (which would hardly have been a factor had he played 30…♖cd8 instead of the pawn sacrifice) led him to commit a grievous blunder that nearly robbed him of the fruits of his play.

40…cxd3 41.♝xd4 ♛xd4 42.♚g3 ♛e4?

42…♕a1 43.♔f3 ♕xa3 44.♔e3 ♔c7 would have won effortlessly.

43.♜h2 ♚b7 44.a4 ♚c6 45.a5 ♚d5 46.h5 gxh5 47.♜xh5

Now there begins, as it were, a brand new game. I managed to win after a hard struggle, Sämisch having missed a chance to draw.

47…♛e2 48.♜h2 ♛d1 49.♜f2 ♚e4 50.♚h2 ♚f5 51.♜g2 ♛f1 52.♚g3 ♚e4 53.♜f2 ♛h1 54.♜g2 ♚d4 55.♜h2 ♛d1 56.♜g2 ♚c4 57.♜f2 ♛h1 58.♜h2 ♛e4 59.♜f2 ♚b3 60.♜h2 ♚c2 61.♜f2 ♚d1 62.♜h2 ♛c6 63.♚g4 ♛c2 64.♚g3 ♛xd2

The only chance!

65.♜xd2+ ♚xd2 66.f5! ♚e3 67.g6 fxg6 68.f6

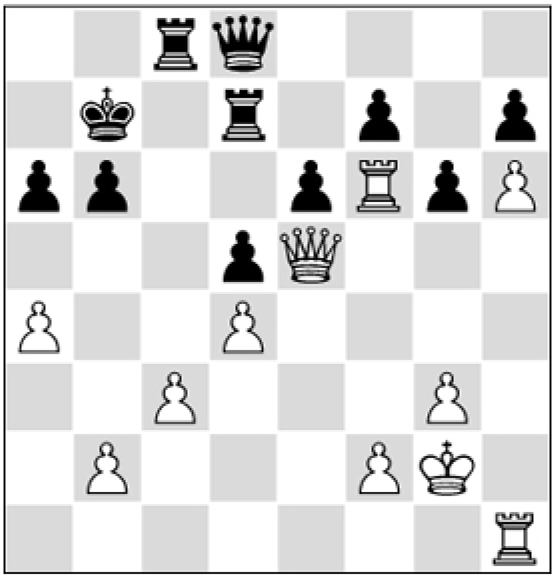
White fears ghosts. 68.fxe6 would have led to a draw; e.g., 68…d2 69.e7 d1♕ 70.e8♕ ♕f3+ 71.♔h2 ♔f2? 72.♕xg6.

68…d2 69.f7 d1♛ 70.f8♛ ♛g1+ 71.♚h3 ♚e4 72.b5? ♛h1+ 73.♚g3 ♛e1+ 74.♚g4 ♛xa5 75.♛d6 ♛b6 76.♚g5 ♛xb5 77.♚f6 ♛f1+! 78.♚g7 ♛f5 79.♛c6+ ♚xe5 80.♛c5+ ♚e4 81.♛xa7 e5 82.♛g1 ♚d5 83.♛d1+ ♚c5 84.♛c1+ ♚b5! 85.♛b2+ ♚c6 86.♛c3+ ♚d7 87.♛d2+ ♚e8 88.♛d5? ♛d7+

White resigned. With 88.♕a5 Sämisch could still have offered some resistance. A very interesting queen endgame.

Game 14

Alexander Alekhine
Aron Nimzowitsch
(conclusion) St Petersburg 1913/14



From a play-off game to determine the first prize at the St. Petersburg tournament, 1913.

53.♖f4

Compare this position with Game 12 after Black's 33rd move. The difference lies in the *type* of wing attack: in Game 12 the advanced pawn was supported on a file, while here it is supported on a diagonal, which exerts less force.

53…♖c4

The combined play intended by White in the center and on the kingside both falter on the weakness of his own queen's wing (cf. the preliminary discussion). Instead of the text move, possible too was the oppositional 53…♕h8; e.g., 54.♕g7 ♕xg7 55.hxg7 h5 56.g4 ♖g8 57.gxh5 gxh5 58.♖xh5 ♖xg7+ 59.♔f3, and now, perhaps, 59…a5 followed, if circumstances permit, by …b6-b5. Black may well be able to hold this ending, but the text move is much better.

54.♜a1

One makes such a move reluctantly, but 54.♕g7 is fended off with 54…f5; e.g., 55.♕e5 ♖xa4 56.♕xe6 ♖e7 57.♕f6 ♕d7 and Black stands better.

54…♜c6 55.♜f6

55.♕g7 would not be without danger in view of 55…f5 56.♕e5 ♕g5 57.♖h1 ♖e7 and …♖c4.

55…♛f8 56.♛e3 ♜e7 57.♛f3 ♛e8! 58.g4 ♛d7 59.♜e1 ♜c7

Black has made good progress: the f7-pawn is well protected, the a4-pawn is under attack, and the g7-square is hard for White to get to.

60.b3

Weakening White’s queenside still further.

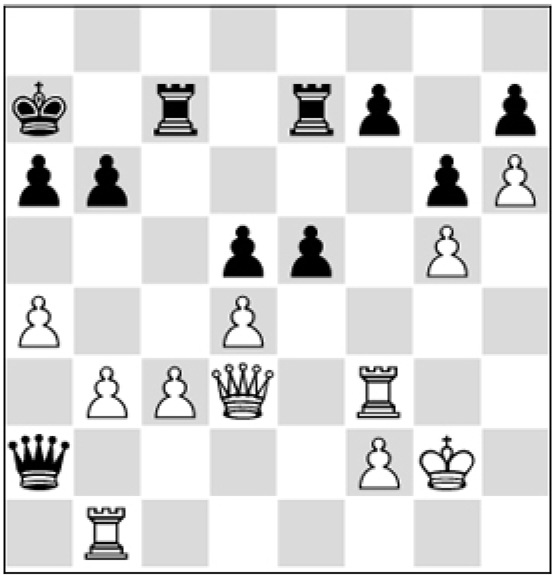
60…♚a7 61.g5 ♛d6 62.♛d3 ♛a3

With this move Black goes on the attack.

63.♛c2 ♛b4 64.♜c1 ♛a3 65.♜e1 ♛b4 66.♜c1 ♛a3 67.♜e1 ♛b4 68.♜c1 ♛d6 69.♛d3 ♛a3 70.♜b1

If again 70.♕c2, then 70…♖c6 and …♖ec7.

70…♛a2 71.♜f3 e5



After this breakthrough White’s position, weakened in all corners and on all the board’s edges, can no longer be held.

72.♖e3 e4 73.♕d1 f5! 74.gxf6 ♖f7 75.♖a1 ♕b2 76.♖b1 ♕a3 77.c4 ♖xf6 78.cxd5 ♖cf7 79.♖e2 ♕d6 80.♕c2 ♕xd5

Black now has a powerful kingside attack.

81.♔f1 e3 82.♖xe3 ♕h1+

Better than 82…♖xf2+.

83.♔e2 ♖xf2+ 84.♔d3 ♕d5 85.♕c8 ♖d7

and Alekhine resigned, for 86.♖e4 would lead to mate after 86…♖f3+ 87.♔d2 ♕g5+.

Game 15

Aron Nimzowitsch
Alexander Alekhine
Semmering 1926 (1)

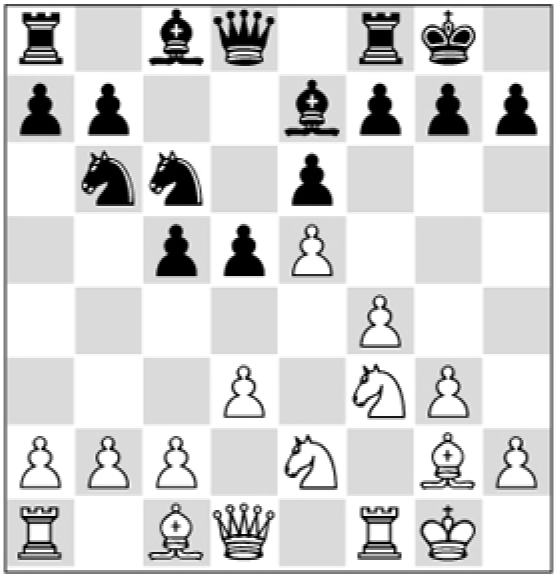
1.e4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 ♘fd7 4.f4 e6 5.♘f3 c5 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♗g2

The second player’s kingside seems somewhat hemmed in, but in return his center is that much more mobile.

7…♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 ♘b6

9…d4 would be bad because of 10.♘e4, with centralization. On the other hand, 9…f6 was strongly to be considered; e.g., 10.exf6 ♗xf6, when Black controls the center.

10.♘e2!



10…d4!?

Black wants to brand White’s previous move a mistake, for indeed the knight can no longer come to e4.

But the text move is an error and would have been better replaced with 10…f6; e.g., 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.c3 e5 13.fxe5 ♘xe5, when Black does not stand badly.

11.g4! f6

This move, which Black has twice refrained from, now leads, in view of the weakness at e4, to a miserable result.

The *prophylactic* defense 11…♖e8 12.♘g3 ♗f8 13.♘e4 ♘d5 (with f4-f5 prevented) therefore deserved preference.

12.exf6 gxf6

On 12…♗xf6, 13.♘g3 e5 14.f5 would have brought no joy to Black.

13.♞g3 ♞d5

Black tries to protect the threatened wing from the center outward, but this should not have been enough.

14.♛e2 ♝d6 15.♞h4

To threaten 16.♗xd5 followed by ♘hf5.

15…♞ce7 16.♝d2

Here 16.♘h5 was sharper; e.g., 16…♘g6 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♘f5, with a winning attack.

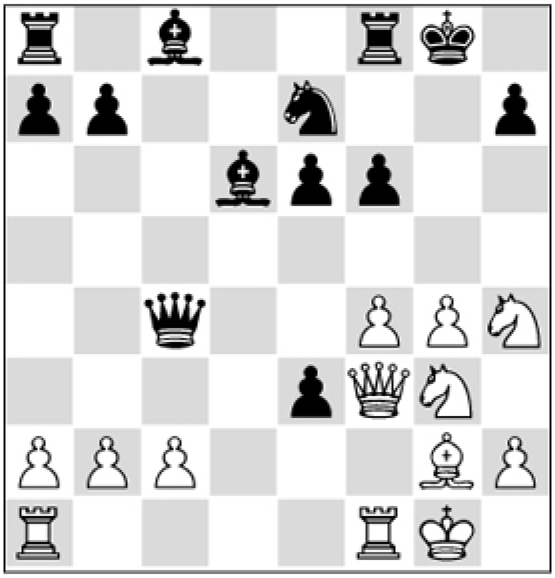
16…♛c7 17.♛f2

17.♘h5 was still to be preferred.

17…c4! 18.dxc4 ♞e3!

With this ingenious diversion Dr. Alekhine succeeds temporarily in bringing his opponent’s attack to a standstill.

19.♝xe3 dxe3 20.♛f3 ♛xc4



The position has clarified to some extent. Black has a passed pawn, which, to be sure, is not in the best of health but which nevertheless is heavily insured against death. We mean by this that the bishop diagonals c6-h1 (after a potential …♗d7-c6) and c5-g1 would compensate for the loss of the e3-pawn.

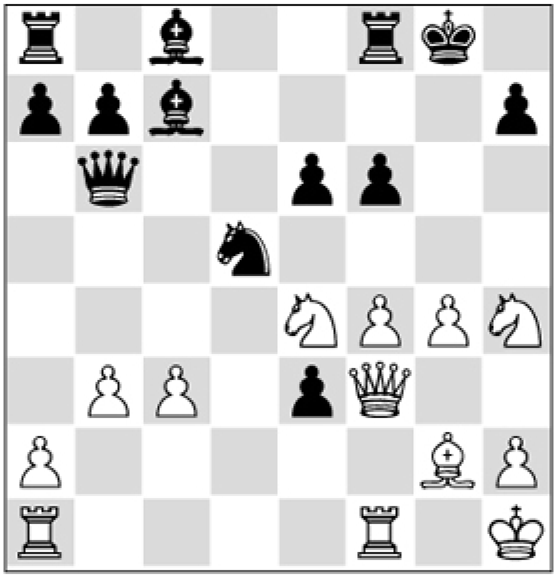
It would therefore be of greater importance for White, rather than chase after the dubious win of a pawn, to continue his kingside assault, and in particular with g4-g5. The omission of this move leaves White with an inferior game.

21.♞e4 ♝c7 22.b3 ♛d4 23.c3 ♛b6 24.♚h1

White has pinpointed the spot of the enemy breakthrough.

24…♞d5

Better, certainly, was 24…♗d7.



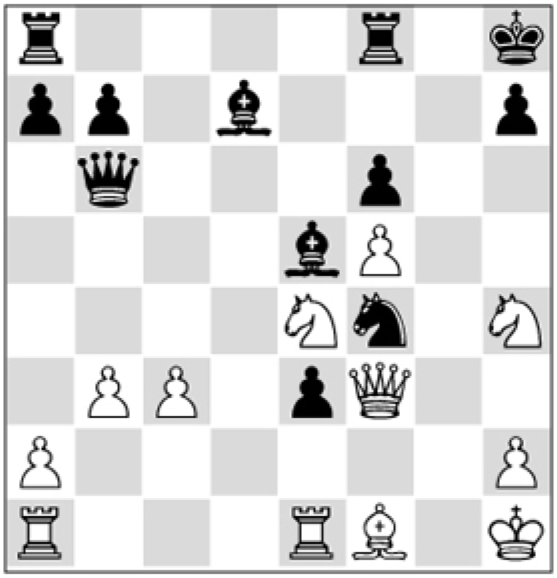
25.f5

Here White neglects the opportunity to play 25.g5, which would have won; e.g., 25…fxg5 26.♘xg5 ♖xf4 27.♕h5, or 25…f5 26.♕h5 fxe4 27.♗xe4, etc.

25…♘f4! 26.♖fd1 ♚h8

The better continuation, according to H.Wolf, was 26…e2 27.♖d2 ♕b5, followed perhaps by …♕e5.

27.♗f1 exf5 28.gxf5 ♗e5 29.♖e1 ♗d7



Now matters develop just as described in the note to move 20: White wins the pawn, but Black gets pressure by reason of the oblique action of the two bishops.

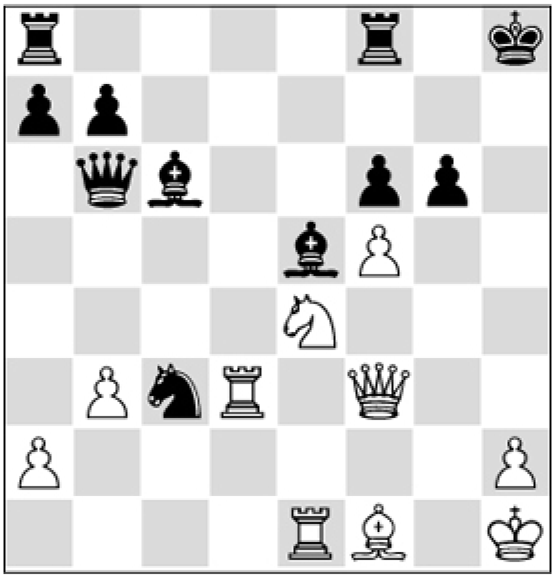
30.♖xe3 ♗c6 31.♖ae1 ♘d5

With 31…♖g8 Black could intensify the pressure.

32.♖d3 ♘xc3

Pretty, but insufficient. It is true that accepting the sacrifice would be fatal (33.♖xc3 ♗xe4 34.♕xe4 ♕f2), but White has a truly astounding counter-combination at his disposal.

33.♘g6+ hxg6



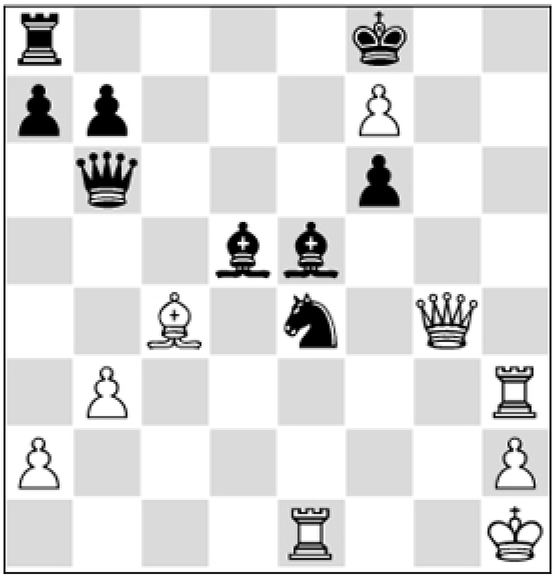
34.♕g4!!

The point. It would be bad to strike out at once with 34.fxg6 ♔g7 35.♕h3 ♖h8 36.♖d7+ ♗xd7 37.♕xd7+ ♔xg6, when White is threatened with mate at h2.

34…♖f7?

Here, 34…♖g8 was imperative. The sequel would be 35.fxg6 ♔g7 36.♖d7+ ♗xd7 37.♕xd7+ ♔xg6 38.♗d3! ♔h6 39.♕h3+ ♔g7 40.♖g1+ ♕xg1+!, when a win for White is still far in the distance.

35.♖h3+ ♔g7 36.♗c4 ♗d5 37.fxg6 ♘xe4 38.gxf7+ ♔f8



39.♜xe4

There was a simpler win with 39.♕g8+ ♔e7 40.f8♕+ ♖xf8 41.♖h7+ ♔e8 42.♕xd5.

39…♝xe4+ 40.♛xe4 ♚e7 41.f8♛+!

The passed pawn’s lust to expand!

41…♜xf8 42.♛d5 ♛d6

Black’s 42…♕c6 would lead not to the exchange of queens but to the loss of his own queen, namely through 43.♖h7+ ♔e8 44.♗b5.

43.♛xb7+ ♚d8 44.♜d3 ♝d4 45.♛e4 ♜e8 46.♜xd4

Black resigned.

5. A mobile pawn mass in the center

How contact is maintained between the advancing center pawns and their supporting pieces

Games 16 and 17

In Game 13 (see moves 26 and 27, as well as the variation given in the note to move 30: 30…♖cd8 31.cxd4, etc.) we have already seen the indicated procedure. In that position the advance of the pawns was by no means an isolated occurrence, happening so to speak by itself. On the contrary, it drew its strength from the readiness of the pieces behind the pawns to occupy the central squares. It was a case therefore of a centralization action prepared behind the scenes.

In Games 16 and 17 the process is similar. In No. 16, where we see the subtle central maneuver ♕e4-d4-d5 and the powerful impact of this on the flanks (b6 and g7), it was only through centralization that the advance d5-d6 was made possible.

In our Game 17, too, the performance of the centrally placed pieces is quite significant. In addition to the voluntary sacrifice of the c-file, the positional try (32…h5) is especially characteristic. This last-mentioned maneuver is especially significant: in positional games involving competent masters a strong central build-up often manifests itself in such a deployment.

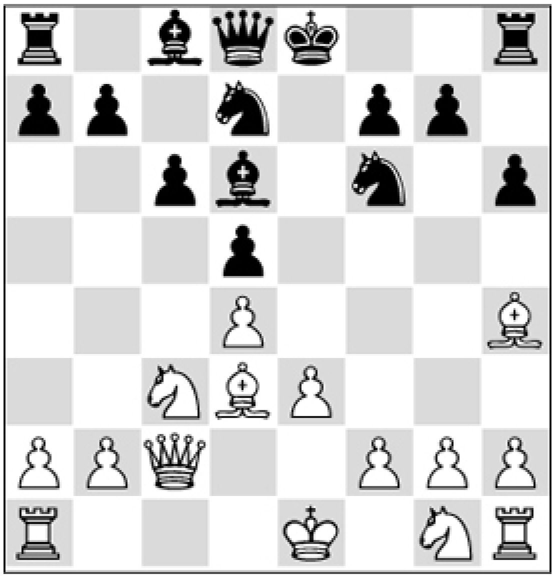
Game 16

Aron Nimzowitsch
Massimiliano Romi
London 1927

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♘bd7 5.e3 c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♗d3 ♗d6

7…♗e7 would be better.

8.♕c2 h6 9.♗h4



The second player now suffers from serious ‘castling-troubles’, by which we mean that, in the position before us, castling kingside would be too dangerous, while castling queenside would be hard to prepare. In these circumstances Romi’s *strategy of tacking* (retaining the option of castling on either wing) must be considered appropriate here.

9…♛a5 10.0-0-0 ♝b4 11.♘ge2 ♝e7

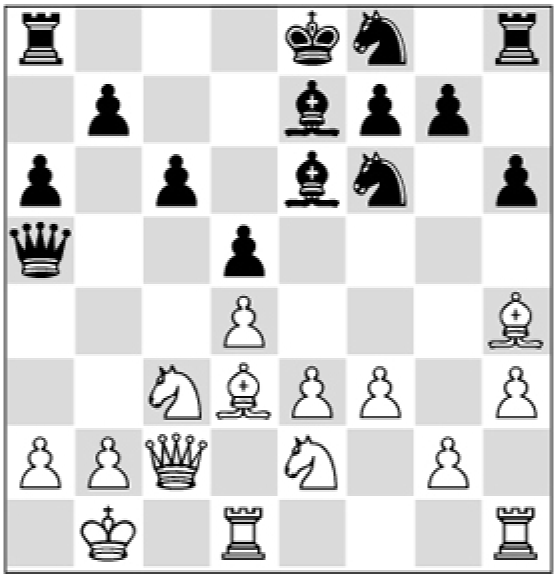
Skilfully marking time! Black wanted to divert White’s king knight from the route g1-f3-e5.

A fine maneuver, by all means, one that bespeaks more real feeling for chess than many a brilliantly conducted Hussar attack.

12.♚b1 ♘f8! 13.h3

In order if necessary to be able to withdraw the bishop to g3 without having to fear …♘h5.

13…♝e6 14.f3 a6



15.a3

Initiating a strong attack at this point would involve difficulties; e.g., 15.e4? ♘xe4! 16.♗xe7 ♘xc3+ and 17…♔xe7.

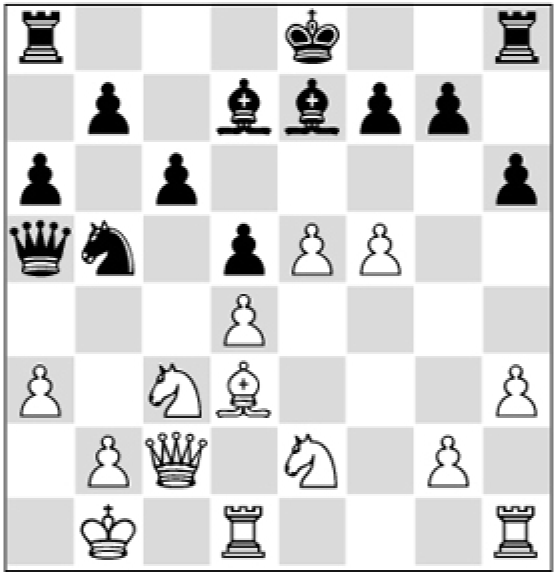
15…♝d7

Planning the excursion …♘e6-c7-b5.

16.♝xf6! ♝xf6 17.e4 ♘e6 18.e5 ♝e7 19.f4

The mobile pawn center.

19…♘c7 20.f5 ♘b5



21.♖hf1

Contact is being established; cf. the introductory note to this game.

21…♛b6

On 21…♗xa3 I wanted to play 22.♗xb5 axb5 23.bxa3 ♕xa3 24.♕a2, which without the preceding 21.♖hf1 would fail to …♗xf5+. The central contact is already noticeable. Better than the text move, incidentally, is the exchange on c3 followed by …0-0-0; e.g., 21…♘xc3+ 22.♘xc3 0-0-0 23.♘a4 ♔b8 24.b4 ♕c7 25.♔a2, when White's attack would not be easy to carry out.

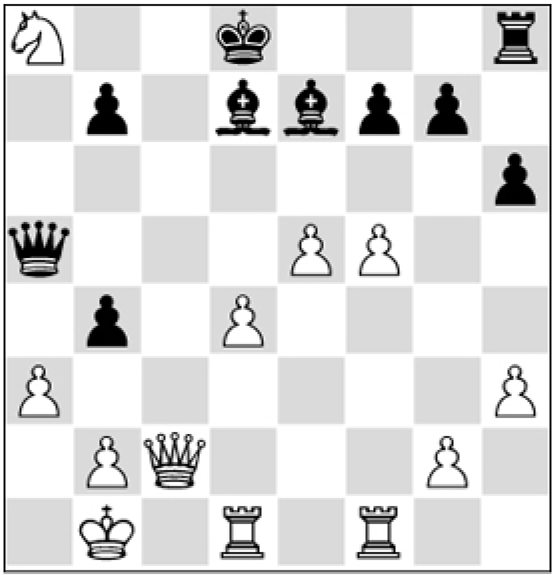
22.♗xb5! axb5 23.♘f4 b4 24.♘cxd5

The point.

24…cxd5

Or 24…b3 25.♕e4, with a strong attack.

25.♘xd5 ♛a5 26.♘c7+ ♚d8 27.♘xa8



27…♛xa8

Forced, for on 27…bxa3 28.d5 axb2 the liquidation 29.♕c7+ ♕xc7 30.♘xc7 ♔xc7 31.d6+ already decides.

28.d5 ♛c8 29.♛e4

This central placement significantly enhances the dynamic value of the white center pawns.

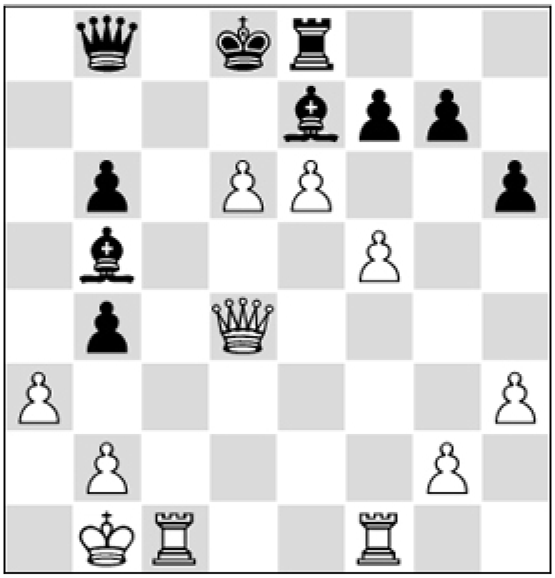
29…♜e8 30.♜c1 ♛b8 31.e6!

There now appears to be a dead point at d6 over which the pawns cannot pass. This would be so if the centralized queen were not there! But she is – and the obstacle is surmounted with ease.

31…♝b5 32.♛d4

Threatening 33.♕b6+

32…b6 33.d6!



If now 33…♕xd6, then 34.♖fd1! and wins. If, however, 33…♗xd6, then 34.♖fd1 ♔e7 35.♕xg7 ♖f8 36.♕xh6, with a quick decision. We note that the queen, from d4, has exerted her effect equally on b6 as on g7 – the usual consequence of centralization.

33…♝f6 34.e7+ ♚d7 35.♛d5 ♝xf1 36.♛c6#

Game 17

Ernst Grünfeld
Aron Nimzowitsch
Kecskemet 1927 (8)

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♝b4 4.♛c2 d6

Also possible at this point is 4…b6; e.g., 5.e4 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 7.f4 and now 7…♘fd7, after which Black will develop his forces by …♘bc6 (with a further …♘a5, if possible), …♗b7, …c7-c5 (never …e6-e5), and …0-0-0, when he surely has a defensible game.

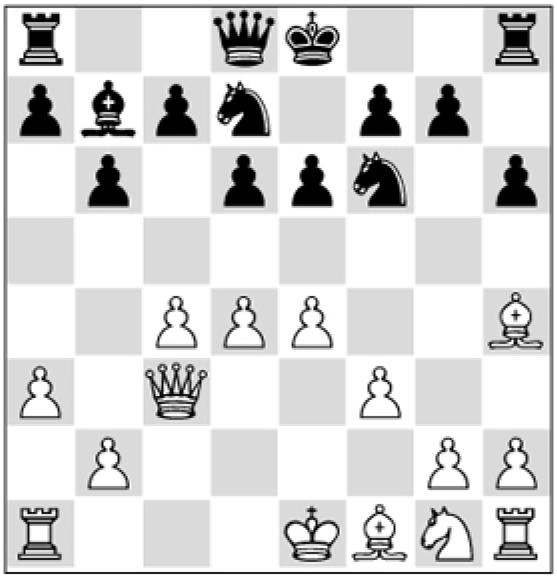
5.♝g5 ♞bd7 6.a3

A loss of time. Instead, 6.e3 seems best; e.g., 6…b6 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.f3.

6…♝xc3+ 7.♛xc3 h6 8.♝h4 b6

Very good also would be 8…0-0, for if 9.f3 (as in the game), then simply 9… d5, etc.

9.f3 ♝b7 10.e4



White’s build-up has at best a passive, defensive value, for after, say, 10…e5 11.♗f2 c5 12.d5 (or 12.dxc5 dxc5 followed by …♕e7 and …♘d7-b6-c8-d4) g5, the two bishops pose no danger. But at the same time, Black’s attack will hardly get through.

10…♘xe4

Cheeky exuberance!

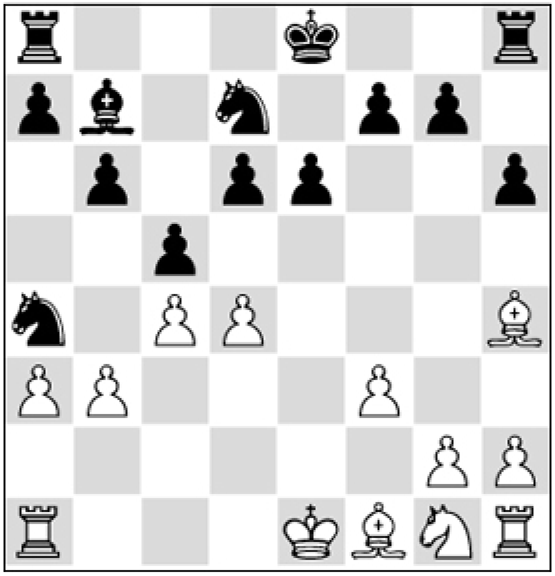
11.♗xd8 ♘xc3 12.♗h4!

Less good would be 12.♗xc7 ♔e7 13.bxc3 ♖hc8 14.♗xd6+ ♔xd6, for the white c-pawn cannot be held against the build-up …♖c7, …♖ac8, followed by …♘b8! and …♗a6. But now, after 12.♗h4!, Black has to surrender a piece.

12…♘a4

At this point the player of the black pieces called to mind the American slogan, ‘Make the best of it!’ Do not despair, find the relatively best chance in the worst circumstances! Make the win as difficult as possible. The American thinks this way, and such an outlook is not at all bad! This can be seen in the game before us.

13.b3 c5!



14.bxa4?

Weak; 14.d5 was indicated, though even in this case Black, by 14…exd5 15.bxa4 dxc4 16.♗xc4 d5 17.♗b5 g5 18.♗g3 0-0-0, would have assumed a defensive position that would by no means have been easy to rattle. After the text move, however, White gradually drifts into an inferior position.

14…cxd4 15.♞e2 e5 16.♞c1 ♞c5

Black now has two pawns and a strong position for the piece. He also has definite prospects of winning a further two pawns – hence he already has the advantage!

17.a5 bxa5

This pawn helps cover important squares, so its importance is not to be understated.

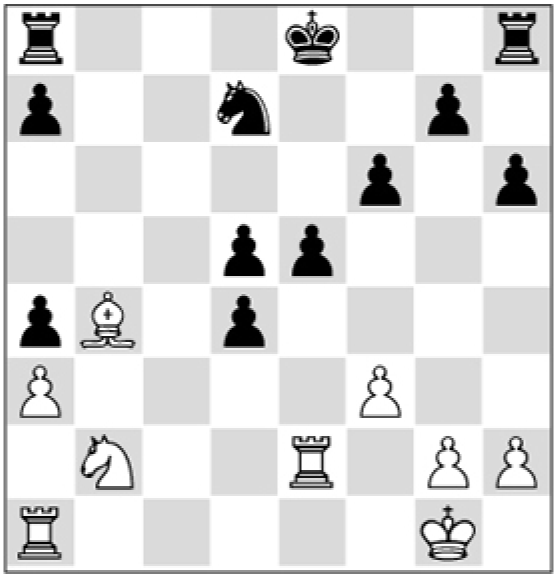
18.♞d3 ♞d7

The correct retreat, keeping the e5-square under observation; e.g., 19.c5? dxc5! and the pawn on e5 is protected. For this reason 18…♘e6 would be bad, for now the reply 19.c5 (19…♘xc5 20.♘xc5 dxc5 21.♗b5+, with an open game) would be unpleasant for the second player.

19.♝e2 ♝a6 20.0-0 ♝xc4 21.♝e1 a4 22.♝b4 d5 23.♜fe1 f6

White must be given no opportunity for a sacrificial combination at e5.

24.♞b2 ♝xe2 25.♜xe2



25…♚f7

Also playable was 25…♖c8 26.♘xa4 ♔f7, but I wanted to give him the c-file so that I could advance my center pawns that much more quickly. The further course of the game proved me right.

26.♖c1 ♘b6 27.♖c7+ ♚g6 28.♖ec2 e4! 29.♖2c6 d3 30.♖e6 ♜he8! 31.♖xe8 ♜xe8 32.♚f1

32.♖xa7? ♖c8!.

32…h5

An attempt to provoke fresh weaknesses.

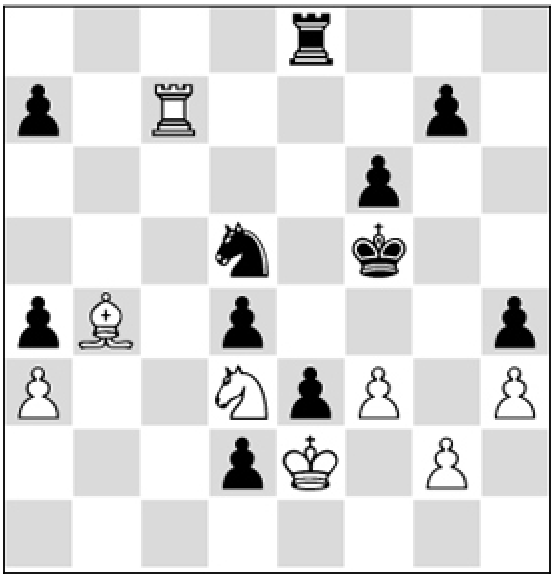
33.h3

Black was probably in a position to force this move in the long run (with the threat of …h5-h4-h3), but White should not have acceded to the text move without a fight, for now there is a terrible hole at g3.

33…h4! 34.♚g1 ♚f5 35.♚f2 e3+ 36.♚f1 d2 37.♚e2 d4 38.♘d3

This move only apparently achieves a blockade: the ensuing knight maneuver shows it to be illusory.

38…♘d5!



39.♜c5

If 39.♖c4, 39…♘xb4 decides: 40.♘xb4 (40.♖xb4? ♖c8!) 40…♖d8 41.♘d3 ♖b8 42.♖b4 ♖xb4 43.♘xb4 ♔f4 and 44…♔g3.

39…♜d8 40.♝a5 ♜d7 41.♜c4 ♞f4+ 42.♞xf4 ♚xf4 43.♝c3

Or 43.♗c7+ ♔f5, etc.

43…♚g3 44.♜xd4 ♜xd4 45.♝xd4 ♚xg2 46.♝xe3 ♚xh3 47.♝xd2 ♚g2

White resigned.

6. Giving up the pawn center

Games 18 – 20

This need not signify a catastrophe, for in all the examples we have looked at so far there is only one question that matters, namely, whether the central squares are under sufficient control. Under strong control by hostile forces the mobility of the free pawn center is reduced to a precarious degree, and this center will even become subject to attack.

In Game 18, Steiner misses the opportunity to establish pressure against his opponent's free pawn center. In Game 19, we find an insufficiently motivated attempt to fully paralyse a powerful and elastic center, an effort that is literally blown to pieces – that is, not the attempt but the actors in the drama: the pawn at c4 and soon after the pawn on e4. In Game 20 there occur in quick succession:

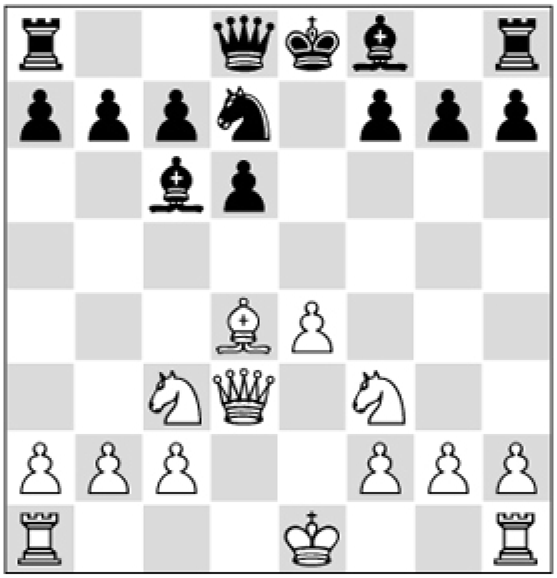
1) the surrender of the center;
2) the re-conquest of same, although at the cost of a pawn;
3) the compensation for a pawn minus by ‘light-square centralization,’ when
4) Black should have had rather the better game.

But his 33rd move diverts the game from its logical course, as a result of which it loses some of its didactic value.

Game 18

Aron Nimzowitsch
Lajos Steiner
Bad Niendorf 1927

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 d6 5.d4 ♗d7 6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.♕d3 ♘d7 8.♗e3 exd4 9.♗xd4



Black suffers not so much from the problem of the pawn center but because the centralized bishop on d4 keeps the g7-pawn under fire.

9…f6?

This move seems to us to be the decisive mistake.

Correct instead was the immediate 9…♘c5; e.g., 10.♕e2 ♘e6 11.0-0-0 ♗e7 12.♘d5 0-0 13.♗c3 ♖e8 followed by …♗f8, with a fully adequate influence on the center. Or else 12…♗xd5 (rather than 12…

0-0) 13.exd5 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 0-0, with …♗f6 next, when Black stands well.

10.♞h4

A diversion that is by no means premature.

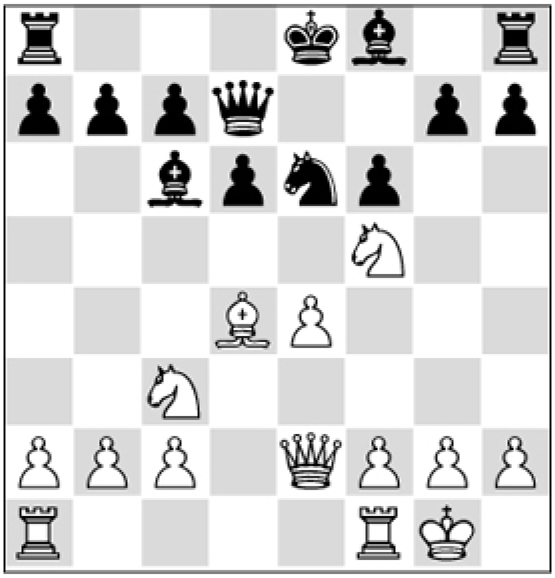
10…♞c5 11.♛e2 ♞e6 12.♞f5

Now Black can no longer achieve a satisfactory development: 12…♗e7? 13.♘d5 ♗xd5 14.exd5 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4, with decisive possession of e6.

12…♛d7

12…g6 would be a futile gesture; e.g., 13.0-0-0 ♔f7 14.♕c4.

13.0-0!



Not only a developing move but also a waiting move. That is to say, Black is in all circumstances forced to create a new weakness if he is to reach any kind of reasonable development; so White calmly waits to see whether his opponent will play …a7-a6 or …b7-b6. Hence 13.0-0, which has the appearance of a developing move, was in fact an attempt quite similar in spirit to the move 32…h5 in Game 17.

13…b6

13…a6, too, had its darker side. But completely bad would be 13…0-0-0; e.g., 14.♗xa7 b6 15.a4 ♔b7 16.a5 ♔xa7 17.axb6+ ♔b8 18.♖a7 ♗b7 (the only move) 19.♖xb7+! ♔xb7 20.♖a1 cxb6 21.♕a6+ ♔c6

22.♕b5+ ♔b7 23.♕d5+ ♕c6 24.♖a7+ and wins. Instead of creating a weakness with …a7-a6 or …b7-b6, a Steinitz would have tried 13…♗e7; e.g., 14.♘d5 ♗d8! 15.c4 0-0 16.♗c3 ♖e8, when Black’s game is terribly constricted yet not so easy to finish off.

14.a4

Now the wheels are well oiled.

14…a5 15.♘d5 ♘xd4

15…0-0-0? 16.♗xb6!.

16.♘xd4 ♗b7 17.♘e6 ♖c8 18.♕h5+ g6 19.♘xf6+ ♔f7 20.♘xd7 gxh5 21.♘dxf8

Black resigned.

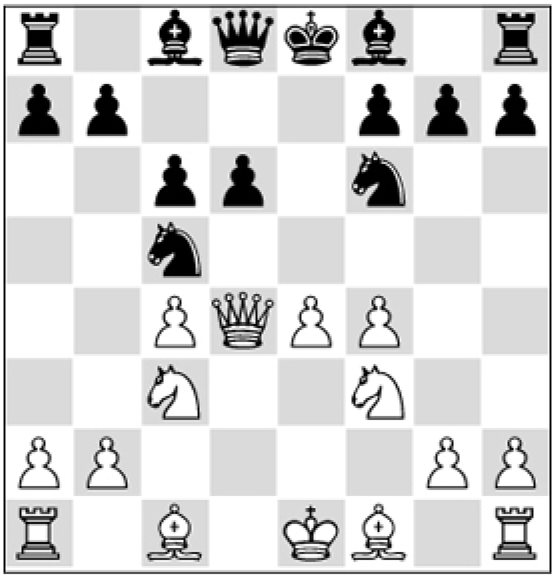
Black’s position, as indicated, could have been held with 9…♘c5, and perhaps later on even with 13…♗e7! and 14…♗d8 – although in that event one would need the defensive powers of a Steinitz! Also, 10…♘e5! would have had a powerful effect!

Giving up the center is not necessarily catastrophic.

Game 19

Semyon Alapin
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1911 (16)

1.e4 c6 2.c4 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7 5.f4 e5 6.♘f3 exd4 7.♕xd4 ♘c5



In order to tame the tiger that is ready to spring – in plain terms, the center that is ready to advance. If 8.e5?, then 8… dxe5 and White has nothing.

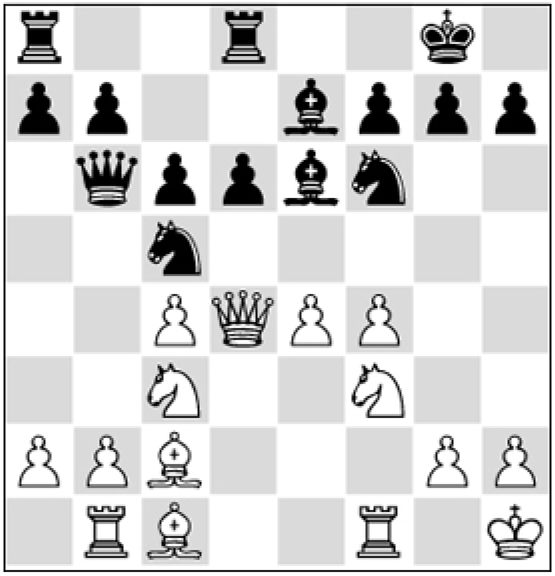
8.♗d3 ♕b6

8…♘xd3+, with the ‘two bishops’, also came into consideration.

9.♗c2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♔h1 ♖d8

The taming continues.

12.♖b1 ♗e6!



This is the counter-chance: c4 is to be rolled up. And the reason why this *must* happen originates at a deeper level: why should the c4-pawn imagine that it can paralyse the elastic and strong black center (the d6-pawn)! For this presumption the *monsieur* will be severely punished.

13.f5

But this is an enormous concession, for by so advancing the white center loses a good deal of its mobility. On other moves, however, the rolling-up action referred to would come into effect; e.g., 13.♗e3 ♕a6 14.b3 b5 (or 14…d5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.e5 ♘fe4); or 13.b4 ♘a6 14.♕d3 ♘xb4 15.♕e2 ♕c5.

13…♗c8 14.♗g5 ♘cd7 15.♕d2 a6! 16.b3 ♕c7 17.♖bd1 b5

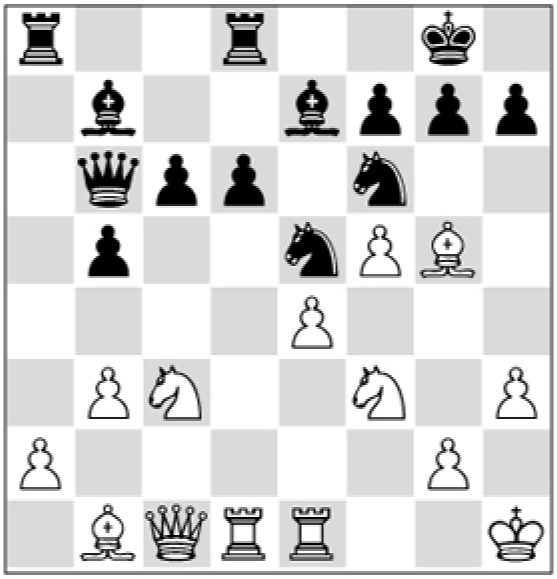
Black’s ‘justified anger’ now breaks forth.

18.♖fe1 ♘e5 19.cxb5 axb5

The pompous windbag at c4 has been blown off the board, and no one could care less.

20.♗b1 ♗b7 21.♕c1 ♕b6 22.h3

22.♗e3 ♕a5 23.♗g1 looks sounder.



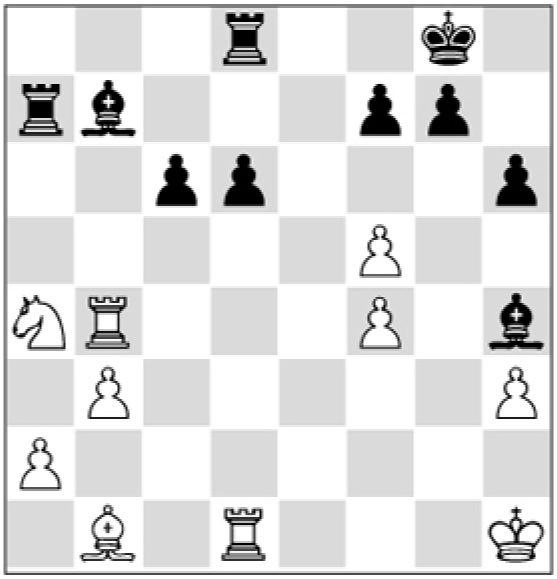
22…♘xf3!

The introduction to a profound combination.

23.gxf3 ♕f2 24.♕e3 ♕g3 25.f4 ♕xe3 26.♖xe3 h6 27.♗h4 b4

The last two pawn moves are the point of the combination – the white center is now overcome in a surprising manner.

28.♘a4 ♘xe4!! 29.♖xe4 ♗xh4 30.♖xb4 ♖a7



And with his two bishops – the white pawn formation having been torn to pieces – Black has a won game.

31.♝e4 ♝e7 32.♝f3 d5 33.♜bd4 ♜d6 34.♚h2 ♜f6 35.♝g4 ♝d6 36.♜c1 h5 37.♚g3

On 37.♗xh5 there follows 37…♖xf5 38.♗g4 ♖xf4, winning a piece.

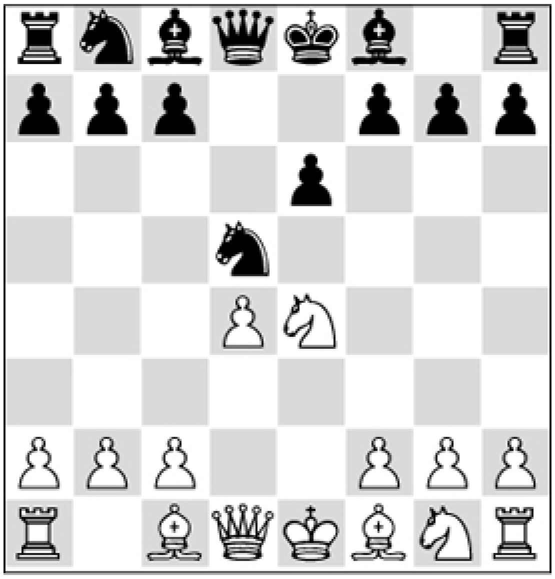
37…hxg4 38.hxg4 g5 39.fxg6 fxg6 40.g5 ♜f5 41.♚f3 ♜a8 42.♞c5 ♝xc5 43.♜xc5 ♜xa2

0-1

Game 20

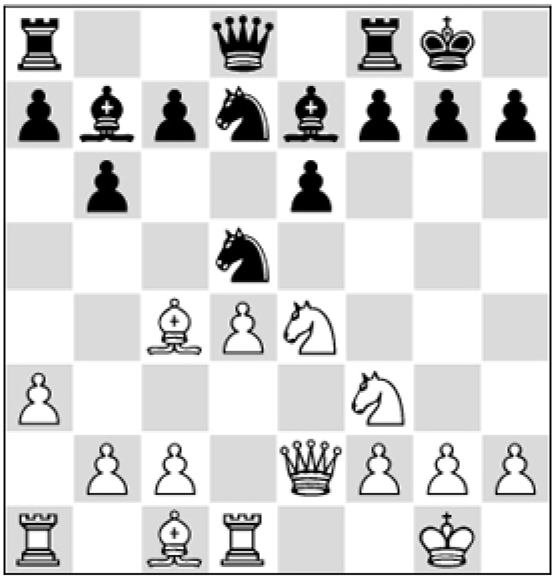
Alexander Alekhine
Aron Nimzowitsch
Kecskemet 1927 (5)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.exd5 ♞xd5 5.♞e4



Thus very early Black has arrived at the not especially unpleasant situation of having to manage *without* a pawn center. He solves the problem quite satisfactorily:

5…♘d7 6.♘f3 ♗e7 7.♗d3 b6 8.0-0 ♘b4! 9.♗c4 ♗b7 10.♕e2 0-0 11.a3 ♘d5 12.♖d1



A preventive move directed against …c7-c5.

12…c5

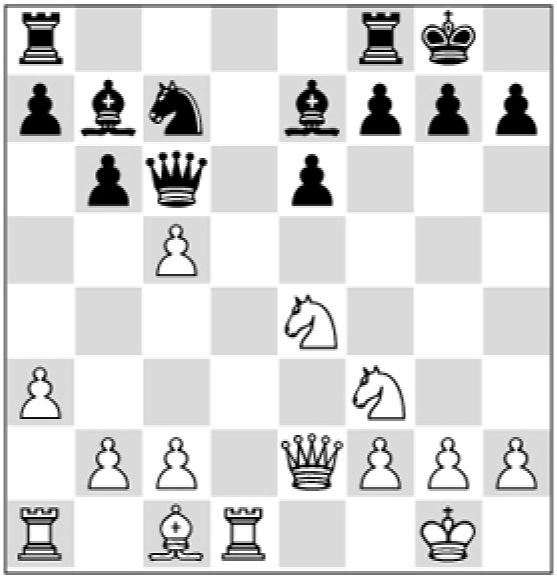
Nonetheless, Black lets himself be provoked into opening the position all too quickly. Preference should have been given to a *gradual* opening through 12…c6, …♕c7, and …♖fd8, then, finally, …c6-c5.

A cramped position should not be liberated too quickly – in chess, too, freedom, savored in a few rash moves, is intoxicating. But with 12…c6, etc., Black’s game would have been robust and full of vitality (after 12…c6 and 13…♕c7, an eventual …♘f4 is also possible, e.g., in the event of ♗d3).

13.♝b5! ♞c7 14.♝xd7

Alekhine does not of course allow 14.dxc5 ♘xb5 15.♕xb5 ♗xe4 16.♖xd7 ♕e8 17.c6 ♖c8.

14…♛xd7 15.dxc5 ♛c6



16.♞d6!

Disdaining the possible win of a pawn with 16.cxb6 axb6 17.♖e1, for then 17…♘d5 would follow (18.c4 ♘f6 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6, with two splendid diagonals for the bishops), when Black gets a powerfully centralized game. For example: (17…♘d5) 18.♘e5 ♕c7 19.♘d3 ♖ac8 20.c3 ♖fd8, when Black has rather the better game.

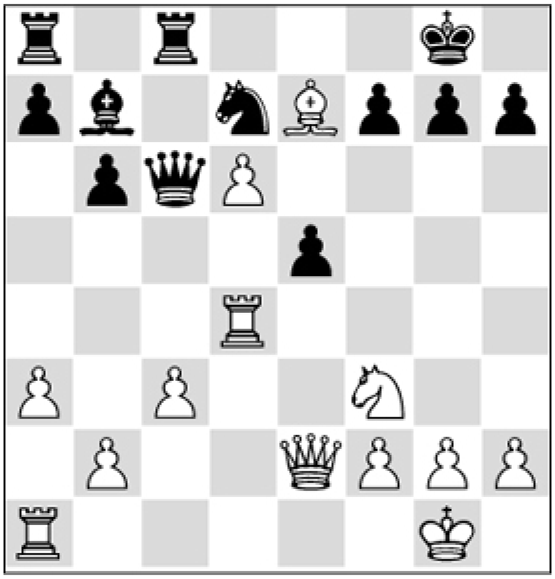
16…♝xd6!

There is nothing better. On 16…♗a6 17.c4 bxc5 18.♘e5 ♕a4 there would follow 19.♗h6!; e.g., 19…♗xd6 20.♖xd6 gxh6 21.♕g4+ ♔h8 22.♖d7, with a winning position.

17.cxd6 ♞e8 18.♝g5

Again a cunning move.

18…♘f6! 19.♖d4 ♘d7 20.♗e7 ♖fc8 21.c3 e5

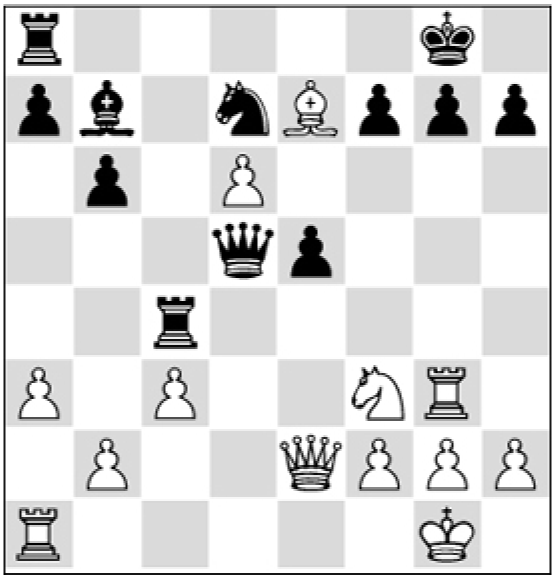


And now it is clear that Black’s centralization, despite all his opponent’s ingenuity, has not been done away with. In addition, the position of the bishop on e7 is somewhat problematic, while the bishop on b7, in contrast, radiates a lively vitality. The game is level – the pawn minus is pretty trivial.

22.♖g4

To try to give a sphere of action to the bishop locked up on e7. At the same time, the knight on f3 is released, as the g2-square is now covered by the rook.

22…♕d5! 23.♖g3 ♖c4!



24.♖d1

Here Alekhine believes he could have ‘stormed’ the position as follows: 24.♘g5 h6? 25.♖d1 ♕c6 26.♘xf7 ♔xf7 27.♕h5+ ♔g8 28.♕g6. He overlooks, however, the possible resource 24…g6! 25.♖d1 ♕c6! 26.♖f3 f5, when the otherwise decisive sacrifice 27.♖xf5 is not possible because of the mate threatened at g2. After the text move, Black makes use of a singular maneuver to force an agreeable exchange of rooks.

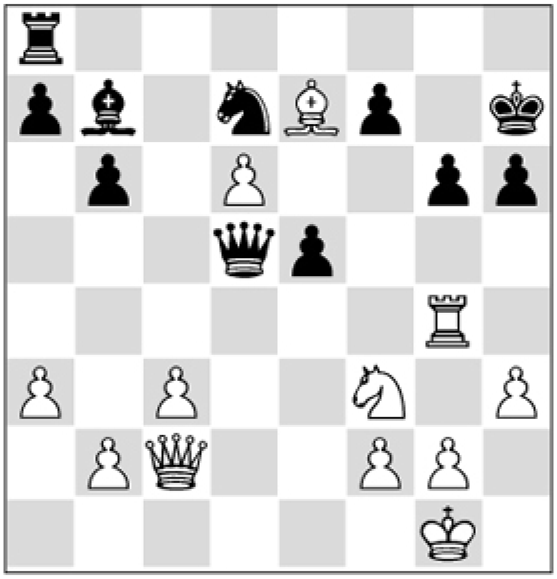
24…♕e4 25.♕f1 ♕c2! 26.♖d2 ♕a4 27.♖e2

On 27.h3, which Alekhine later recommended as better, I had contemplated, among other things, a change of front with …♗e4-g6, with a later …f7-f5, etc. We note that Black’s maneuvers in the center all go through e4.

27…♖e4 28.♖xe4 ♕xe4 29.♕c1 h6 30.h3 ♚h7 31.♕d1 g6

Inadmissible would be 31…f5 in view of the sacrifice 32.♘g5+ followed by ♕h5+ and ♕xg5.

32.♖g4 ♕d5 33.♕c2



33…♖g8

The rook excursion 33…♖c8 and …♖c4 was both tempting and risky. Risky, because of White’s threat ♘h4xg6, tempting because of considerations deriving from the ‘system’. For the e4-square is here the most valuable point strategically, and such a point should attract the pieces like a magnet. (see ‘Overprotection’). On 33..♖c8 there could follow 34.♘h4 e4 35.f3 ♕c5+, and now either 36.♔h1 or 36.♔h2. If 36.♔h1, Black plays 36…♕e3 37.fxe4? h5 38.♖g5 ♕e1+, winning a piece; on 36.♔h2, however, Black has the choice between 36…♕e3 (37.fxe4 ♖c4) or 36…♘e5; e.g., (36…♘e5) 37.♖f4 ♕e3 38.g3 exf3! 39.♖xf7+ ♔g8 and White is powerless in the face of the threat 40…♕e2+. What appears to emerge from this cursory analysis is that 33…♖c8! was the appropriate move to demonstrate convincingly the illusory character of White’s ‘advantage’.

34.♖h4

Threatening 35.♗g5.

34…f6 35.c4 ♕e6 36.♘d2 ♕f5 37.♕d1 g5

As Alekhine correctly emphasizes, 37… h5 deserved preference here, for now White’s rook again gets out into the open. Both players were short of time.

38.♖g4 ♕g6 39.♖g3 f5 40.♖c3 e4

Here the players agreed to a draw, especially in view of the shortage of time on both sides. After 41.♘b3 followed by c4-c5, White again seems to have the advantage.

From a thorough examination of this game, however, the student can help himself develop, among other things, a feel for ‘weak squares of a certain color’– here, the light squares g2, e4, c4, and d7.

7. Centralization as a Deus ex Machina (the sudden solution)

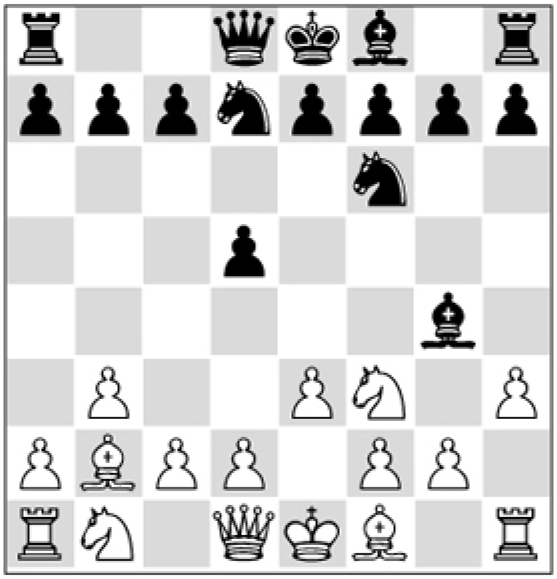
Games 21 – 23

We ask that the reader interested in centralization not skip lightly over the matter to be discussed. A sudden centralization, appearing so to speak as a savior in the nick of time, may seem less typical than the longer, methodical type, true enough! But for this reason the first-named is all the more important in the psychological-didactic sense. What may be impossible for ‘gradual’ centralization, the sudden kind may achieve. And what would this achievement be? Well, instilling in you an *unwavering faith* in the value of centralization. And it is more than just a matter of having familiarized ourselves with the technical details; this alone does not suffice. We must *believe* in the power of centralization, in its ability to work wonders. It is indeed a matter of faith, for only he who has faith in a thing can attain success with it!

Game 21

Aron Nimzowitsch
Frank Marshall
New York 1927 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.e3 d5 3.b3 ♗g4 4.♗b2 ♘bd7 5.h3

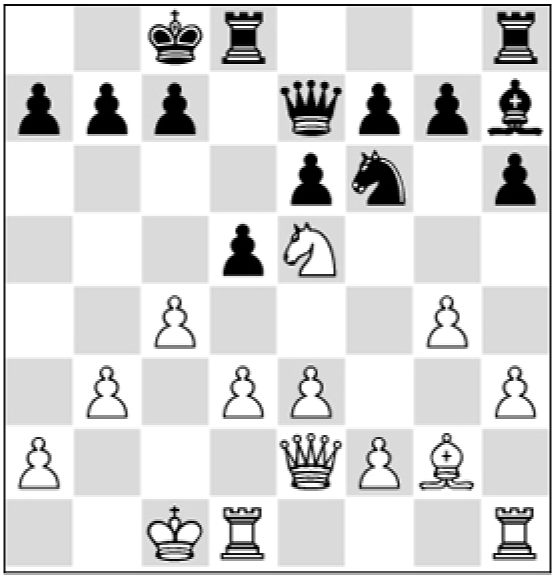


This pawn move makes later kingside castling appear less than desirable and therefore limits White’s resources. Good enough was 5.♗e2 and 6.0-0.

5…♝h5 6.d3 h6 7.♘bd2 e6 8.♕e2

If White were to choose the obvious 8.♗e2 and 9.0-0, he would have to reckon with a pawn storm; e.g., 8.♗e2 ♗d6 9.0-0 ♕e7 10.c4 0-0-0 11.♖c1 g5. I lost in like manner to Dr. Vidmar in the same tournament.

8…♝b4 9.g4 ♝g6 10.♘e5 ♞xe5 11.♗xe5 ♝d6 12.♘f3 ♛e7 13.♗g2 0-0-0 14.0-0-0 ♝xe5 15.♘xe5 ♝h7 16.c4

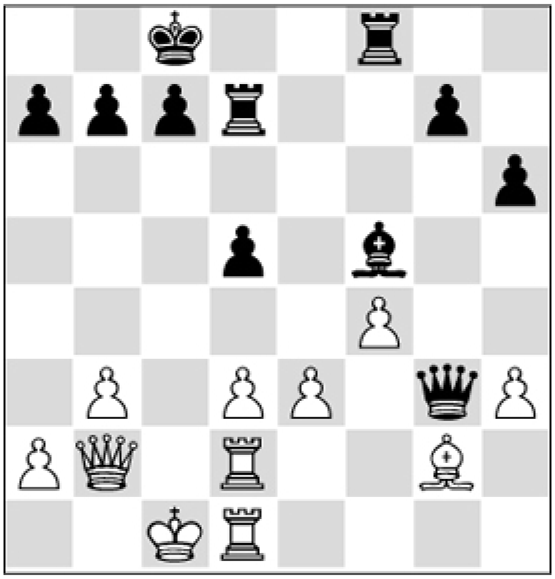


White’s position is now looser, but a line of communication along the second rank *had to* be established.

16…♘d7 17.♘xd7 ♖xd7 18.cxd5 exd5 19.♕b2 f5

With preventive measures like 16.c4 and 19.♕b2 White has been able to secure his king position, yet his weaknesses on the other wing remain. It simply was impossible to play preventively on both wings at the same time, so White, alas, had to submit to 19…f5.

20.♖d2 ♖f8 21.gxf5 ♗xf5 22.♖hd1 ♕g5 23.f4 ♕g3



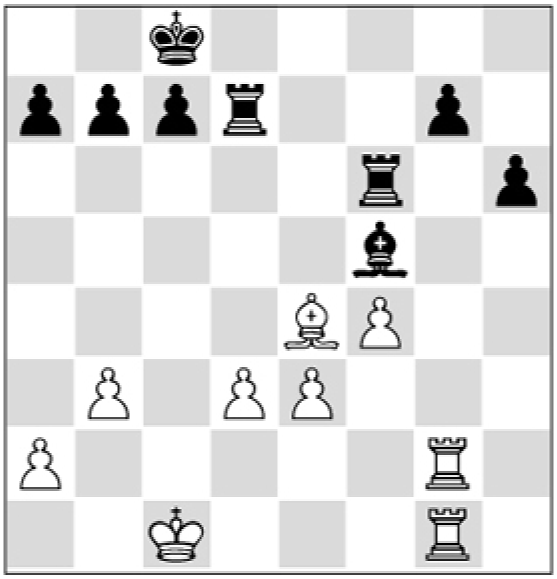
24.♕e5!

This unexpected centralization saves the game! To be sure, the honor for this saving clause must be shared with ‘prophylaxis’ (preventive tactics), for the text move is in a sense a continuation of 19.♕b2.

24…♗xh3

24…c6 25.♖c2 does not help the situation.

25.♗xd5 ♕g6 26.♗e4 ♕f6 27.♕xf6 ♖xf6 28.♖g1 ♗f5 29.♖dg2



Matters seem to be developing as planned: first, centralization, and now a positionally well-justified swivel toward the right flank.

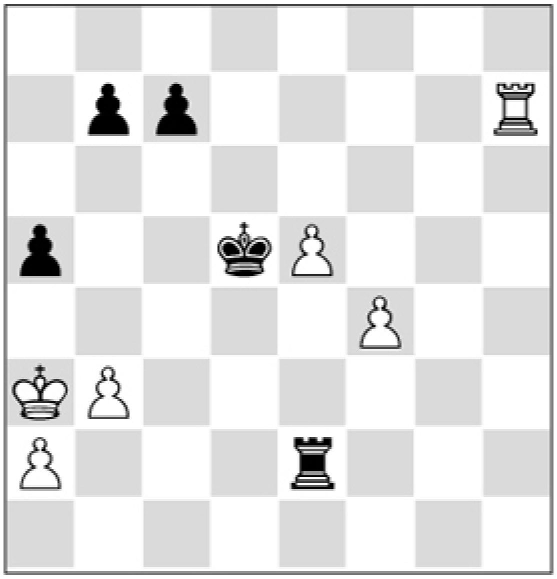
29…♗xe4 30.dxe4 ♖d3 31.♖xg7 ♖xe3 32.♖g8+

The flank attack has intensified into a breakthrough.

32…♔d7 33.♖1g7+ ♔c6 34.♖g6 ♖d6

This attempt – ingenious and spirited in and of itself – to force the white king into a cul-de-sac, should hardly suffice.

35.e5 ♖e1+ 36.♔b2 ♖e2+ 37.♔a3 ♖xg6 38.♖xg6+ ♔d5 39.♖xh6 a5 40.♖h7



40…♖c2

If instead 40…♔c6, then 41.♖e7 b5 42.b4 ♖e3+ 43.♔b2 axb4 44.f5, when the ‘cul-de-sac’ has been shown to be tolerable. This at the price of only one pawn, which, in view of the two connected passed pawns, is of scant significance.

41.♜e7 b5 42.b4

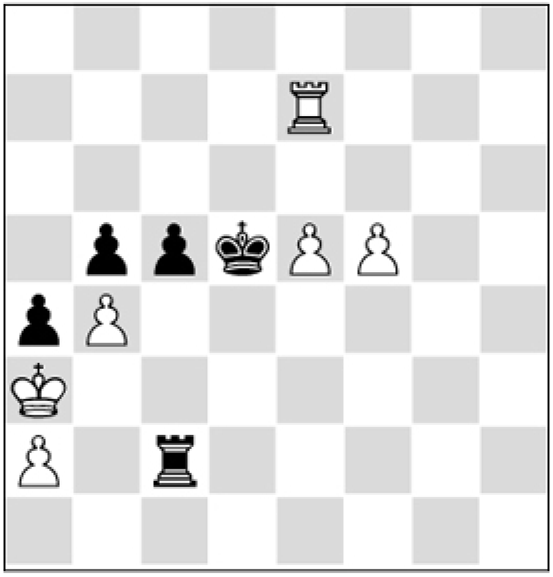
Not 42.f5? because of 42…c6! 43.b4 ♔c4 and mate next move.

42…a4?

There was a faint chance of a draw with 42…axb4+ 43.♔xb4 ♖c4+ 44.♔xb5 c6+ and 45…♖xf4.

After the move played Black is completely lost.

43.f5 c5



44.f6??

A fatal mistake.

With 44.e6 the win was easy to force; e.g., 44…♖c3+ (44… ♔c4? 45.♖c7) 45.♔b2 cxb4 46.♖d7+ ♔c6 47.♖d8 ♖e3 48.f6 and wins.

44…♜c3+ 45.♚b2 cxb4

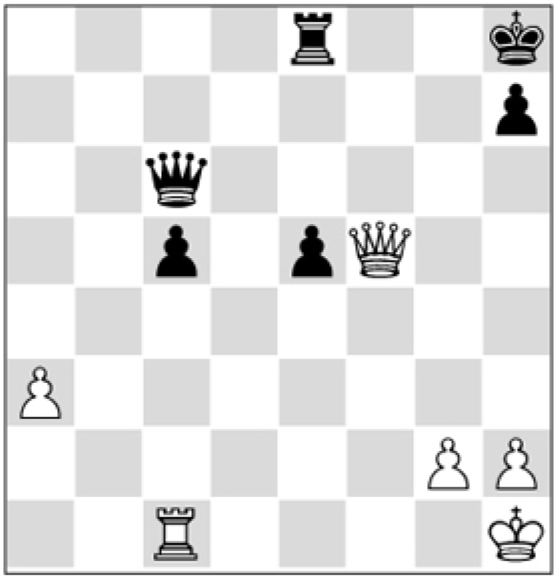
Drawn.

For if 46.f7, there follows 46…a3+ 47.♔b1 ♖f3 48.e6 ♖f1+ 49.♔c2 ♖f2+ 50.♔d3 b3 51.axb3 a2 52.♖a7 ♔xe6 and the draw is obvious.

Without the gross oversight on the 44th move White’s centralization would have won easily.

Game 22

Aron Nimzowitsch
Vladimir Vukovic
Kecskemet 1927 (5)



The black position, with the open kingside and the isolated pawns, would make a less solid impression without the *centralized* queen on c6. As it is, however, everything is in good order – indeed, Black is even planning an advance, namely, …c5-c4 followed by …e5-e4 or simply …c5-c4 by itself; and if, in this position, 37.♕c2, then 37…♖g8. But I succeeded in decentralizing my opponent!

37.♛h5

Threatening 38.♖xc5.

37…♜e7

Or 37…♔g7 38.♖c3.

38.♜d1 ♛g6

There is nothing better! Now, however, I take control of the central diagonal wrested from my opponent.

39.♛f3

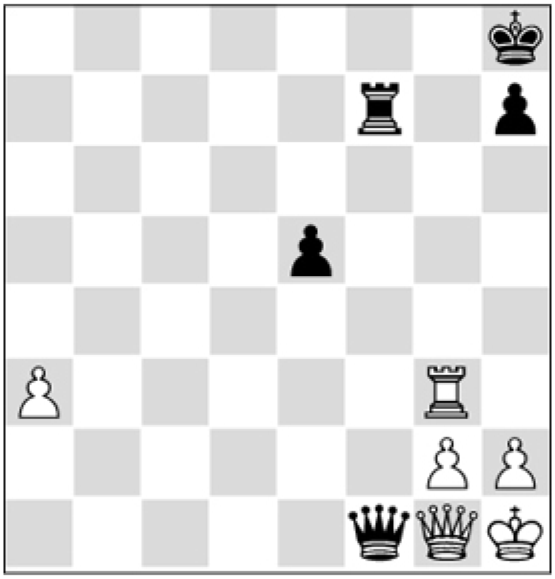
Winning a tempo, as mate is threatened on f8.

39…♚g7 40.♛d5!

And at a stroke the situation has changed entirely.

40…♛h5 41.♜d3 ♛f7 42.♜g3+ ♚h8 43.♛xc5 ♛f1+ 44.♛g1 ♜f7

White has won a pawn, but in return he has had to give up his central position. But the pawn won is sound, and so is the retreating move chosen by White – and the upcoming rook ending is won without great difficulty.



45.h3 e4 46.♔h2 ♖f2 47.♕xf1 ♖xf1 48.♖e3 ♖a1 49.g4 ♔g7 50.♔g3 ♔g6 51.♔f4 h5 52.gxh5+ ♔xh5 53.♔xe4 ♔h4 54.♔d4 ♖c1 55.♖c3 ♖a1 56.♔c4 ♔g5 57.♖f3 ♖b1 58.a4 ♖a1 59.♔b4 ♖b1+ 60.♖b3 ♖f1 61.a5 ♔f6 62.a6 ♔e6 63.a7 ♖f8 64.♔c5

1-0

Game 23

Aron Nimzowitsch
Oldrich Duras
San Sebastian 1912 (19)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3

Today I regard 4.♕g4 as better.

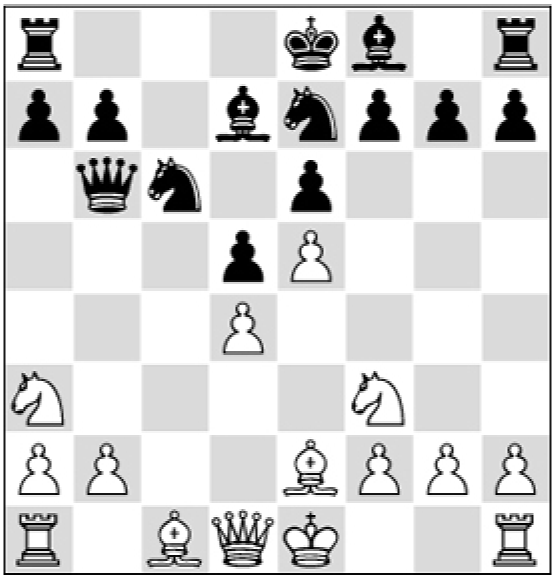
4...♕b6 5.c3 ♘c6 6.♗d3

6.♗e2 is better.

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗d7 8.♗e2 ♘ge7

8…♘h6 may deserve preference.

9.♘a3



9…♘g6

This move runs against tradition; the usual move is 9…♘f5, with pressure against the d4-pawn. This poses a novel and interesting problem for discussion, a problem I should like to formulate thus: ‘Is the move 9…♘g6 to be understood here as decentralization?’ A pawn chain – here the white pawns at d4 and e5, against the black pawns at d5 and e6 – can in general be attacked only at its base (here, d4). It is manifestly less advisable to direct an attack against the chain at its point (here, e5). So much for the pawn chain in general. In this specific case, however, we see the subject in a different light. That is, we notice the knight on a3 and shudder to think of its utter uselessness in the event of Black’s playing …f7-f6. Hence the move …♘e7-g6 seems justified in a *certain* sense in initiating a central action. Should the move therefore be spoken of as a decentralization? A final positional evaluation must be reserved.

10.0-0

To be considered was 10.h4; e.g., 10…♗b4+ 11.♔f1 f6 12.h5, but the success of this diversion, conceived of as a punitive expedition, would be in doubt, for Black could play either 12…♘ge7 (13.h6 fxe5 14.hxg7 ♖g8 15.dxe5 ♖xg7) or even, in sacrificial style!, 12…♘gxe5 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.♕c2 (best) 14…♗c5 (*not* 14…0-0 because of 15.♗e3 followed by ♘g5), when White stands quite poorly.

10…♝e7

10…f6 could be played at once, but Duras likes to disguise his plans if at all possible.

11.♞c2

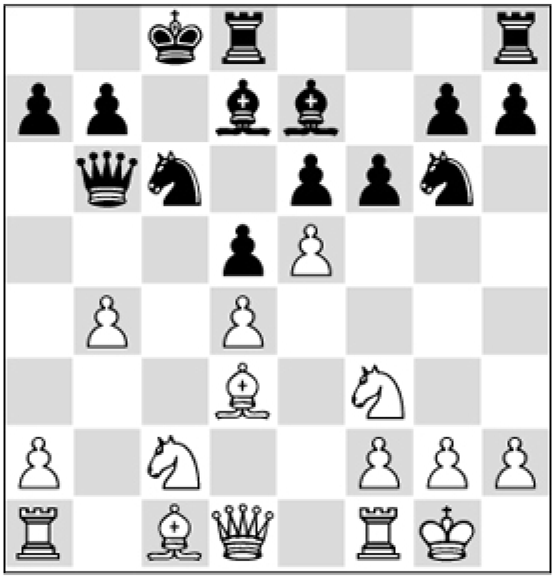
If 11.♖e1, then 11…♗b4 and the rook has to wander back to f1 (12.♗d2? ♘xd4).

11…f6 12.♝d3 0-0-0

Now it must be determined whether Black’s action directed against e5 is in fact relevant to the game.

13.b4

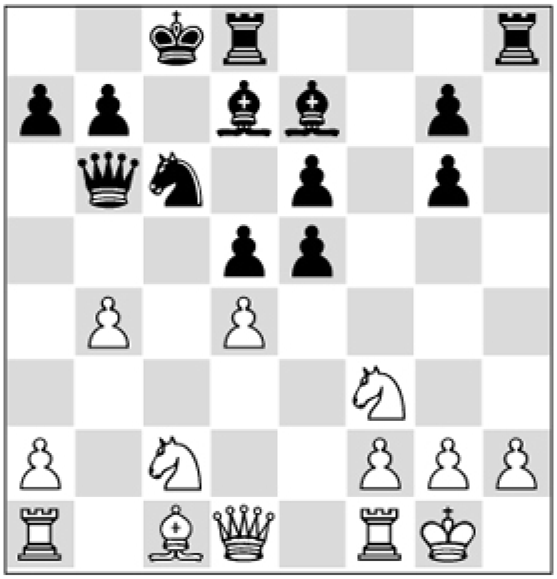
With the object of relieving White’s center by b4-b5. Good, too, was the consolidating 13.♖e1. *Both* moves will have to be made, by the way, and it matters little in which order they occur.



13…fxe5?

Now White gets the d4-square for his knight on c2, and with that the premise for the usefulness of the whole …f7-f6 attack collapses. (Cf. the note to 9…♘g6.) Correct in our view was 13…♔b8 and 14…♖c8. A plausible line would be (13.b4) 13…♔b8 14.♖e1 ♖c8 15.♖b1 (not 15.b5 because of 15…♘a5 and a potential …♘c4), although White would be better as he has a powerful initiative (with 16.♗d2 followed by a2-a4-a5) while Black is hemmed in. This main line of play confirms our impression that the maneuver 9…♘g6 could hardly have had sufficient motivation. And if we consider that there was available to Black the maneuver 9…♘f5 (instead of 9…♘g6), which, from the point of view of centralization, can be regarded as a move of full value, we cannot but assign the epithet *‘decentralizing’* to 9…♘g6.

14.♝xg6 hxg6



15.♞xe5?

With this move White forfeits the whole of his advantage. Correct was 15.dxe5; e.g., 15…♘xb4 16.♗e3 (not 16.♖b1 because of 16…♗a4) and 17.♘d4. In this line White indeed has to shed a pawn, but the really imposing central island in conjunction with the potential lines of attack would fairly soon have given him a strong advantage.

The text move 15.♘xe5 is faulty, for on the one hand the black rook gets the h4-square (with centralizing effect!), and on the other the bishop at d7 becomes effective. And besides, 15.♘xe5 was to be rejected on principle: ‘For the blockaded partner, every exchange of pieces spells relief’. Now White should at best have chances to draw.

15…♞xe5! 16.dxe5 ♝a4 17.♛d2!

The only move; on 17…d4, White could continue with 18.♗b2 d3 19.♘d4! ♖xd4? 20.♕c3+.

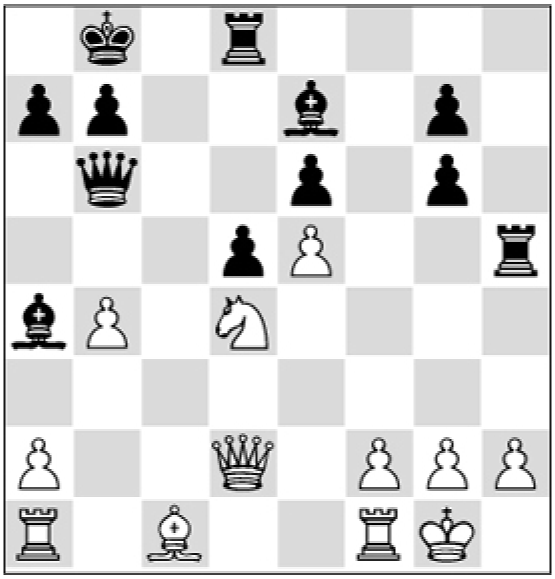
17…♚b8?

Black returns the favor granted him by White’s 15th move. With 17…♖h4! 18.♗b2 ♗xb4 19.♘xb4 ♕xb4 20.♖ac1+ ♔d7 Black could have won a pawn, and the d4-square would have remained under his control.

18.♞d4!

Meaning to centralize even at the cost of a pawn, and this *sudden* and daring emphasis on the centralizing motif saves White’s game, which was on the verge of collapse. Had the first player thought earlier of the possibility of this pawn sacrifice, he would not of course have failed to play 15.dxe5 – but at that stage of the game he may not have been in a frame of mind to make such a ‘heroic’ decision.

18…♜h5



If 18…♗xb4, then 19.♕d3 followed by ♗e3 and ♖b1, when White would have a harmonious game combining both blockade and attack, quite similar incidentally to the variation indicated in the note to the 15th move.

19.♛d3 ♜dh8 20.h3 g5 21.♝e3 g4

On the one side, full-value centralizing moves (♘d4!, ♕d3!, and ♗e3!); on the other, helpless, futile blows. In such circumstances it is no longer difficult to forecast the winner.

22.♞f5 ♝b5

Or 22…♕d8 23.♘xe7 ♕xe7 24.♕d4 and 25.♕xg4.

23.♛a3

A centralizing impact with a large radius – from d4 to a7 and g4.

23…♛a6 24.♛xa6 ♝xa6 25.♞xe7 ♝xf1 26.♜xf1 g5!

There now follows a tenacious but, in the long run, futile resistance.

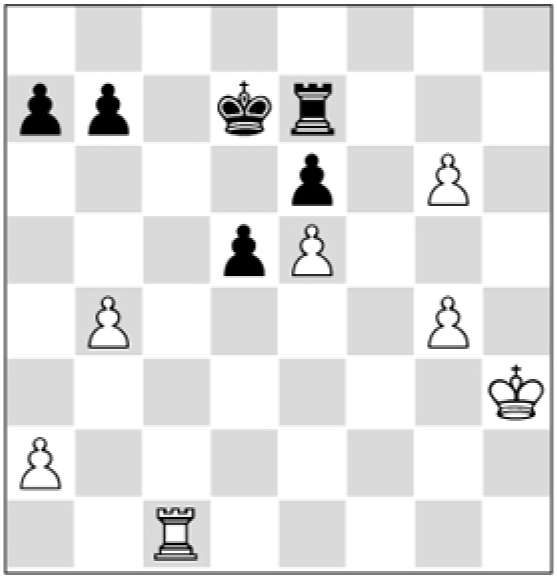
27.f3! gxh3 28.g4 ♜5h7 29.♝xg5 ♜e8 30.♚h2 ♚c7

After a double exchange on e7 the ensuing rook ending would be untenable for Black.

31.♜c1+ ♚d7 32.f4

32.♗f6 here is a much simpler win.

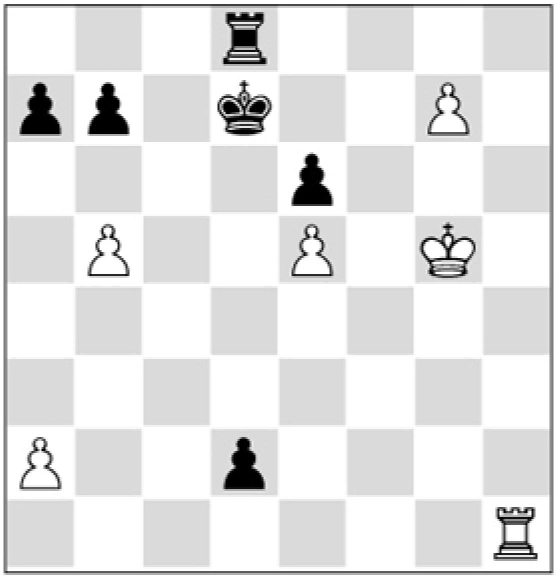
32…♜g7 33.♚xh3 ♜xg5 34.fxg5 ♜xe7 35.g6!



The first g-pawn falls, but the second becomes very strong.

35…♜g7 36.g5 ♜xg6 37.♚g4 ♜g8 38.♜c3 ♜d8 39.b5 d4 40.♜h3 ♚c7 41.g6 d3 42.♜h1 ♚d7 43.♜h7+ ♚c8 44.♜h1 ♚d7 45.♚g5 d2 46.g7

and Black resigned.



There could follow 46…♚e7 47.♔g6 d1♛ 48.♖xd1 ♜xd1 49.g8♕ ♜g1+ 50.♔h7 ♜h1+ 51.♔g7 ♜g1+ 52.♔h8 ♜h1+ 53.♕h7+ ♜xh7+ 54.♔xh7 ♚f7 55.♔h6, winning the pawn ending. A most important game on the theme of ‘centralization’, whose thorough study we most earnestly recommend.

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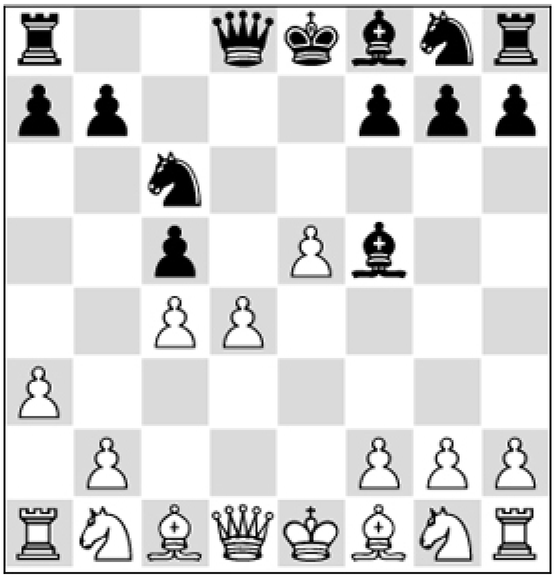
Part II

Restraint and Blockade

Just as they can with centralization, *all* players, regardless of class, can achieve splendid successes by the application of the strategies of restraint and blockade, and I warmly recommend them! We often experience with astonishment how a player of comparatively inferior class handles a blockade with greater freshness and naturalness than does a player of the first class. This applies especially to the employ of my own special stratagem, ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’. Here the gray-haired first-class amateur, with his veneration of pawn-material, tends to fall short of his gifted student of the second class.
Let us observe the play in the following game, played by two amateurs.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.a3 ♗f5 5.e3 c5 6.exd4 ♘c6!



A most surprising pawn sacrifice for the sake of blockade.

7.d5 ♘xe5 8.♘f3 ♗d6 9.♗e2 ♘e7 10.0-0 ♕c7!

White’s extra pawn is inactive for the time being, while the centralized black forces provide an excellent foundation for a slow but sure realization of the constriction of the enemy position.

11.♞xe5 ♝xe5 12.f4

Thus the impact on the center from the d6-h2 diagonal has now resulted in a loosening of the white position.

12…♝d4+ 13.♚h1 0-0-0 14.♞c3 a6

Still better seems 14…♗xc3 followed by …♖d6. Then, on a3-a4, the attack along the b-file would have been fended off easily with …b7-b6 followed by …a7-a5.

15.g4

Better was 15.♗d2 and b2-b4.

15…♝xc3 16.bxc3 ♝e4+ 17.♝f3 ♝xf3+ 18.♛xf3 f5 19.h3 g6

A loss of time.

20.gxf5 was not to be feared, anyway; the immediate 19…♔b8 could have been considered.

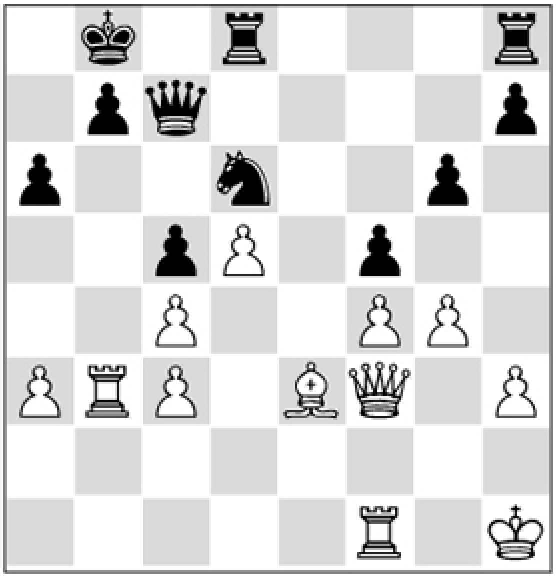
20.♝e3 ♚b8!

Make room for the blockader! The knight heads to d6.

21.♜ab1

21.♕f2 is better.

21…♞c8 22.♜b3 ♞d6



The white position now looks quite helpless. The ‘white’ points at c4 and e4 are weak and the pawn at d5 seems to be blockaded, and with it the diagonal f3-b7.

23.♖fb1 ♔a8 24.♖b6 ♖he8 25.♕f2 ♖xe3! 26.♖xd6 ♖de8 27.♖db6 ♖e2 28.♕f1 ♕e7 29.♖6b2 ♕e4+ 30.♔g1 ♕d3

0-1

The player of the black pieces, Mr. Karl Jacobsen from Copenhagen, after about three months of instruction, had just been promoted to the second class.

Obviously, the strategy of restraint and its application are by no means exhausted by the game just given. Restraint encompasses a broad domain and for that reason is not altogether easy to assimilate. It is important above all to grasp its *inner* value.

A hostile pawn mass seeks to advance; we try to thwart this desire by stemming the threatened advance. Does the process just described delineate the *intellectual content* of the process of restraint with sufficient precision? No. In actuality, restraint is only a sub-maneuver of an attack of lengthy preparation. In the long run it is effective only when the more passive stand against the enemy pawns is associated with a definite attacking idea: If the instrument of restraint lies on an open file, the restraining pawn itself becomes the object of attack; if, on the other hand, the restraining action is based on a diagonal, then the wing that is under assault by the restraining bishop serves as an object of attack. This understanding of the *inner, latent attacking value* of restraint (cf. Games 26-28) will help broaden the horizon of the student of chess.

We consider it our next task to gradually sharpen the learner’s sense of the greater or lesser degree of the dynamic weakness of a pawn or pawn complex. To this end we present a series of games in which doubled pawn complexes, despite their initial elasticity, eventually calcify into complete immobility. We regard these games as a useful exercise. Dynamic weaknesses cannot be better illustrated than by such a complex of doubled pawns.

After these as it were preparatory exercises we shall at last reach a point where we can deal with the problem of the blockade, of which restraint is the first step. In this way we shall learn to weave a blockading net and to avoid the dangers to which any possible leakage in that net may expose us. It is in this sense that the application of prophylactic measures is most especially to be recommended. Finally, we provide two recent and quite original variations (that is to say, my Dresden Triangle variation and the French Defense with the ‘audaciously and defiantly blocked’ c-pawn) and seek to form a bridge between these variations and the line of thought behind the blockade.

Once again we wish to recommend especially that the attentive reader give careful study to the entire second section. There is much to be learned in it.

1. The restraint of liberating pawn advances

In this section the strategy of restraint sees the first demonstration of its capability, as it were its initial test. But we by no means expect from these early examples any broad-scale blockading schemes; we are content rather with the minimum requirement: ‘Liberating pawn advances must be stopped!’ We will now see whether Lady Restraint passes this first test.

Game 24

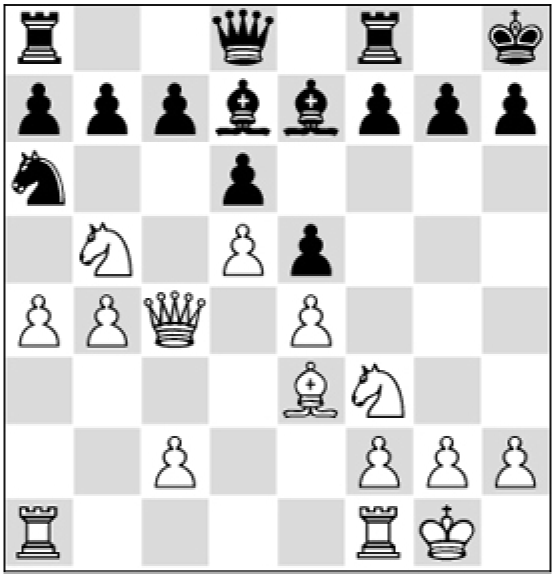
Aron Nimzowitsch
Gyula Breyer
Gothenburg 1920 (7)

The opening moves are well known to us from Game 18:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 d6 5.d4 ♗d7 6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.♕d3 ♘d7 8.d5

Instead of 8.♗e3, as played in the game cited above. White succeeds in getting pressure against the outermost queen’s wing by exploiting the weakness of the a-pawn. There followed:

8…♘c5 9.♕c4 ♗d7 10.b4 ♘a6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.a4 ♔h8 14.♘b5



14…♕b8

Black could have considered the pawn sacrifice 14…g6; if 15.♘xa7, then 15…f5 16.♘b5 f4, with some counter-chances on the kingside.

15.c3!

Preventing the liberating advance 15…c6; e.g., 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♘xd6 ♗xd6 18.♕xa6 and the b4-pawn is protected.

15…h6

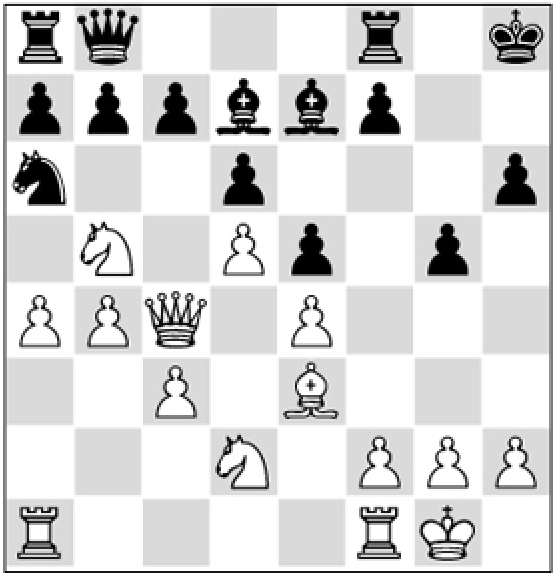
On the immediate 15…f5, 16.♗g5 would have been a comfortable reply for White.

16.♘d2!

In order, on 16…f5, to follow up with the advantageous counter-stroke 17.f4. (Black has one rook less in the game.)

16…g5

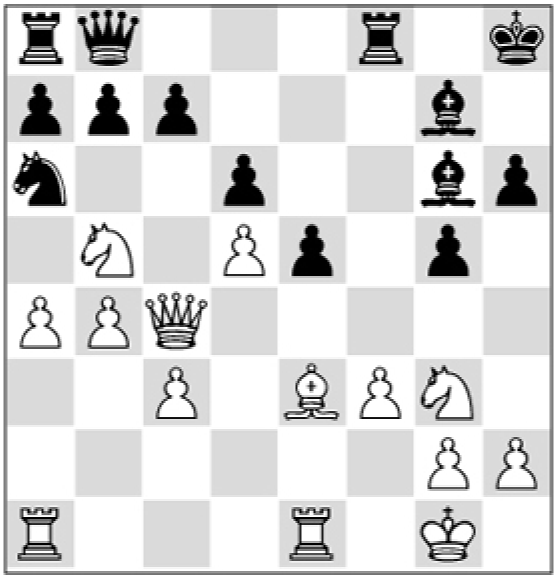
Now, how do we prevent …f7-f5 or else render it ineffective?



17.♖fe1! f5 18.exf5 ♝xf5 19.♘f1

Still simpler would be 19.f3 followed by 20.♘e4, when White is strong on the light squares, and, last but not least, on the e-file. White's very characteristic 17th move we may describe as a 'mysterious rook move'.

19…♝g6 20.♘g3 ♝f6 21.f3 ♝g7



For White, the 'rolling-up' move 22.h4 might come into consideration. But this attack would then founder on the fact that the freeing attempt …c7-c6 (already given up for dead!) would suddenly appear in life size; e.g., 22.h4? c6! 23.dxc6 bxc6 24.♕xc6 gxh4, with an unclear game. We note the vigor of the possible (and even impossible) attempts at liberation. Only rarely does it tend to happen that a freeing advance vanishes forever from the scene. On the contrary, it is much more often the case that such attempts live on under the surface as *potential threats*.

The correct restraining strategy here (directed against the potential threat …c7-c6) consisted of the sequence 22.♖e2 and 23.♖d1 (*not* at once 22.♖ad1 because of the disruptive reply 22…♗c2). Then h2-h4 could no longer be held up. Even so, matters would not have been quite so simple, for Black could still conduct counter-attempts, an instructive example of which is shown in the following variation: 22.♖e2! ♔h7! (to follow up with …♗f7, which, *without* the previous king move first, would fail to 23.♕e4, with long-term centralization. Now, however, on 23.♖d1, the diversion 23…♗f7 could very well follow, as 24.♕e4+ would then be worthless because of 24…♗g6) 23.h4!! (a move made possible by the king's position on h7!) 23…c6 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.h5!, threatening 26.hxg5 with *check*: White wins.

From what has been said, therefore, the correctness of 22.♖e2 is convincingly demonstrated.

22.♜a2

This move gives his opponent a chance to free his game, without, however – his position was altogether too poor already – affording him serious prospects of saving the game.

22…♝f7! 23.♞e4

Making a virtue out of necessity. The exchange sacrifice should win for White.

23…c6 24.♞bxd6 ♝xd5 25.♛e2 ♝xa2 26.♛xa2 ♛c7 27.b5 cxb5 28.axb5 ♞b8 29.♛e6

Powerful centralization, superb development, and chances of a direct attack with h2-h4; this should be enough to win.

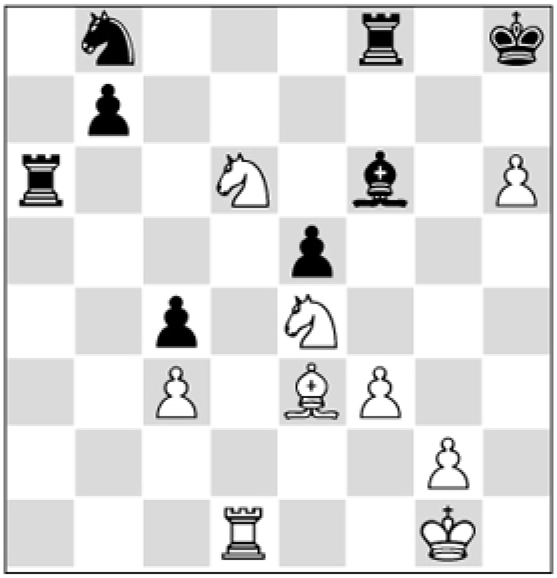
29…a6 30.h4! axb5 31.hxg5 ♜a6 32.♜d1

If 32.gxh6, 32…♗f6.

32…♛c4

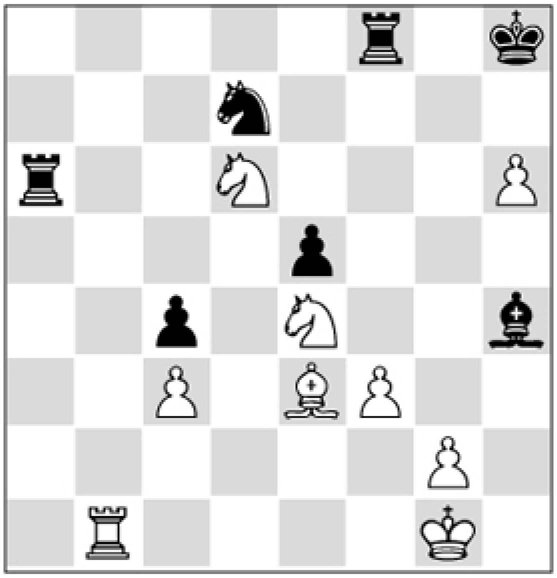
Breyer is defending himself quite cleverly and actually succeeds in surviving the middlegame, although only to reach a lost endgame position.

33.♕xc4 bxc4 34.gxh6 ♗f6



Here I began to play weakly, and after that ever more weakly. At the time this game was played I was laboring under the psychological pressure of the terrible period after the war, in which, shortly before, I was forced to participate as one of the many sacrifices. The game finally ended in a draw, as follows:

35.♖b1 b6 36.♗xb6 ♘d7 37.♗e3 ♗h4



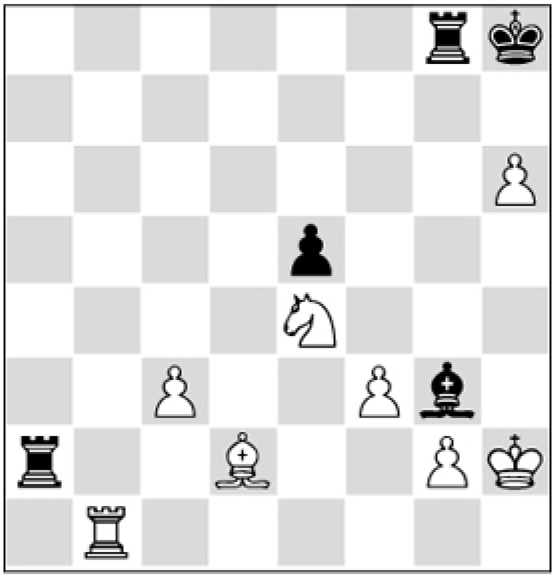
38.♘xc4

38.♖b7 would have won easily; for example: 38…♘f6 39.♘f7+ ♖xf7 (best) 40.♖xf7 ♘xe4 41.fxe4 ♖a3 42.♗d2 ♖a2 43.♖d7.

38…♞f6 39.♘xf6 ♝xf6 40.♘d2

Here, too, the direct attack with 40.♖b7 would have won; e.g., 40…♖c6 41.♘b6 ♖xc3 42.♘d7 ♖f7 43.♖b8+ ♚h7 44.♘f8+ ♚h8! 45.♗g5! ♖b3 46.♖e8 and wins. Or 40.♖b7 e4 41.fxe4 ♗xc3 42.e5 ♖c6 43.♘d6! and White must win. White, as a sign of his depression, plays too little for *direct* attacks.

40…♜g8 41.♘e4 ♝h4 42.♔h2 ♜a2 43.♗d2 ♝g3+



Now a win for White is no longer possible.

44.♔h3 ♝f4 45.♘f6 ♜f8 46.♗xf4 exf4 47.♖b6 ♜a1! 48.♔g4 ♜g1 49.♔xf4 ♜xg2 50.♔f5 ♜h2 51.♔g6 ♜g2+ 52.♘g4 ♜g3 53.♖b7

The seventh rank should have been made use of earlier; now it is too late.

53…♜gxf3

Drawn.

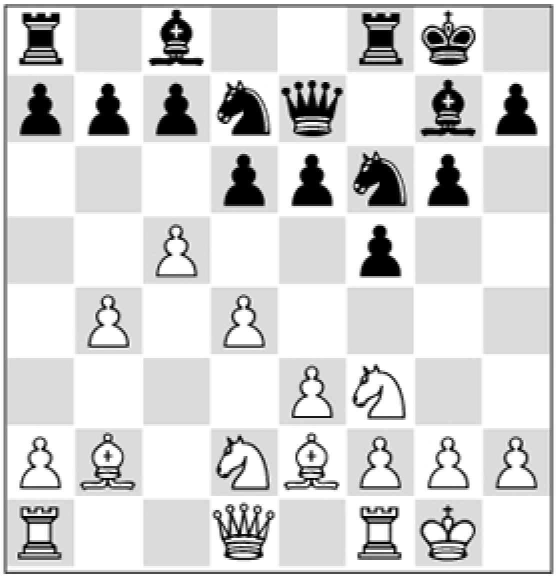
Game 25

Aron Nimzowitsch
Savielly Tartakower
Gothenburg 1920 (5)

1.d4 f5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 e6 4.♗e2 g6 5.c4 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.b4!

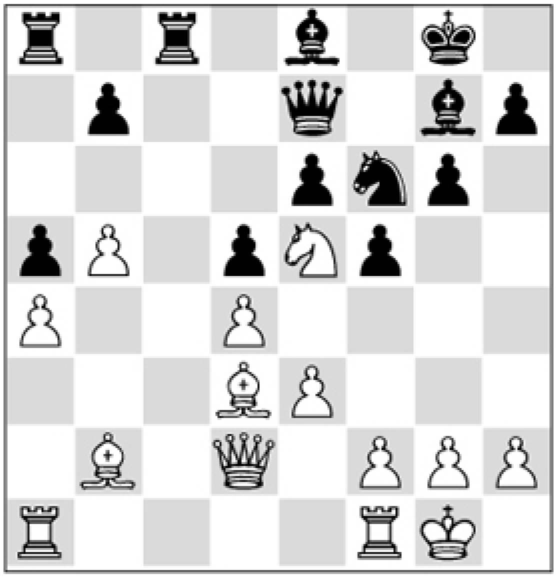
To shift the focus of the struggle to the queenside.

7…d6 8.♘bd2 ♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♕e7 10.c5



White has a clear positional advantage, for 10…e5 would succumb to the sequence 11.cxd6 cxd6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘c4 followed by ♕b3, ♖ac1, and ♖fd1.

10…a5 11.cxd6 cxd6 12.b5 ♘b6 13.♘c4 ♘xc4 14.♗xc4 d5 15.♗d3 ♗d7 16.a4 ♖fc8 17.♘e5 ♗e8 18.♕d2!

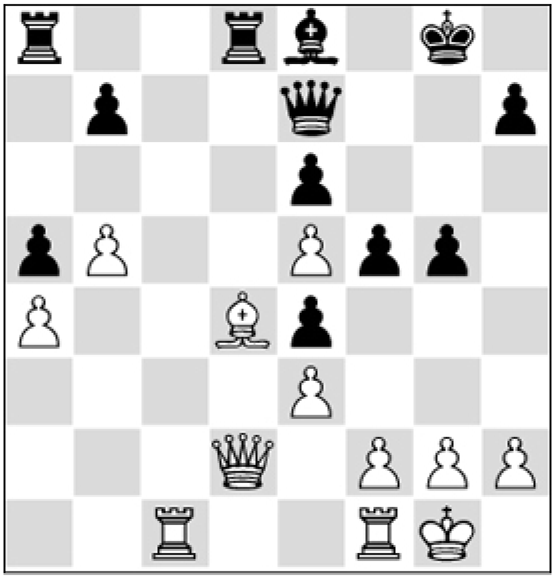


Allowing an end result of bishops of opposite colors!

18…♘e4 19.♗xe4 ♗xe5 20.dxe5 dxe4 21.♖ac1! ♖d8

Out of concern for the otherwise doomed pawns on a5 and b6, Black must avoid further exchanges.

22.♗d4 g5!



How can the liberating advance 23…f4 be prevented?

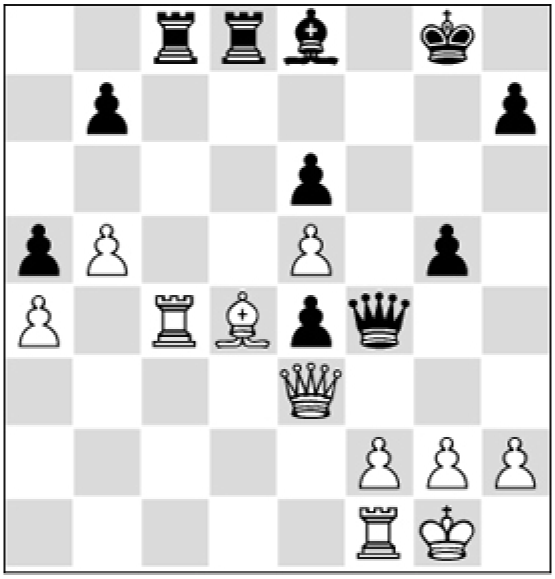
23.♖c4!

Very simply, for after 23…f4, 24.exf4 gxf4 25.♕xf4 could be played.

23…♕f7 24.♕e2?

White should prevent 24…f4; 24.♕c2 suggests itself. After 25.♖fc1, White could proceed to the exploitation of the c-file. After the text move the agile Tartakower escapes his fate.

24…f4! 25.exf4 ♕xf4 26.♕e3 ♖ac8



White is afflicted with a momentary weakening on his first rank; Tartakower has used this seemingly insignificant fact to form a plan that saves the game.

27.♖fc1 ♖xc4 28.♖xc4 ♕xe5! 29.h4 ♕f4 30.hxg5 e5

The game is no longer to be won by either player. There followed:

31.♕xf4 exf4 32.♗b6 ♖d1+ 33.♔h2 ♗g6 34.♗xa5 e3 35.♖c8+ ♔f7 36.♖c7+ ♔e6 37.fxe3 fxe3 38.♗b4 ♖d4 39.♗c5 ♖xa4 40.♖e7+ ♔d5 41.♗xe3 ♖e4

Drawn.

2. Restraint of a central pawn mass

That Lady Restraint makes it more difficult to make liberating pawn advances has now been fully demonstrated. So we can venture to pose more difficult problems to test her skill. This time we shall concern ourselves with the problem of stopping a mobile central pawn mass (how difficult this is we have shown in the games vs. Grünfeld and Romi). This process, quite laborious in itself, can be made easier by coordinating the more passive action of stopping with an attacking idea, however modest. What is meant by this can be seen in the games vs. Alapin and Steiner (Games 18 and 19). Typical, especially, are those cases involving white pawns on e4 and f2 against black pawns on d6 and f7 (met with in the Steinitz Defense to the Spanish Game), where

Black’s semi-open e-file exerts pressure against a threatened e4-e5 and at the same time *poses an outright threat* to the e4-pawn.

In contemporary practice we often find that the restraining maneuvers on the one hand and the coordinated attacking play on the other occur on *widely separated* parts of the board. In Game 27, for example, Black restrains in the center but attacks on the queenside. A similar instance is seen in Game 28. In the ‘brilliancy game’ vs. Marshall (26), this spatial separation is entirely absent (restraining and attacking operations both play out exclusively in the center of the board), it is true, but only because I gave my opponent a completely free hand in the center, as I wanted to attack his queenside.

To summarize:

If restraint is based on an open file, it should operate only in the center; but if a diagonal is our sole instrument of restraint, we then have the duty and obligation to look beyond the center for further places where we can conduct the struggle.

How this is done can be seen in the next three games.

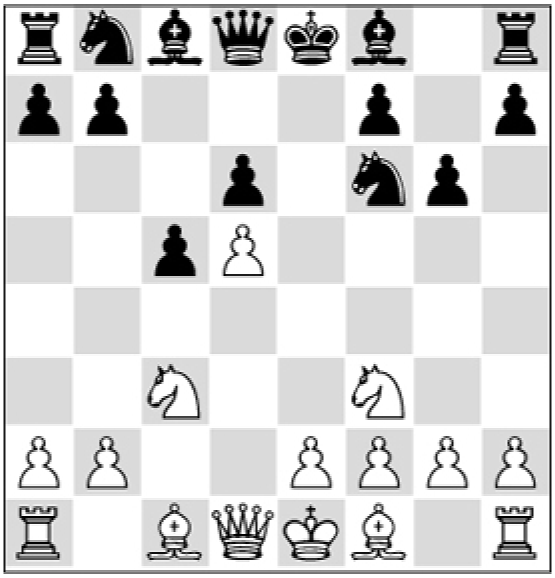
Game 26

Aron Nimzowitsch
Frank Marshall
New York 1927 (7)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.♘f3 c5

This gives a cramped game.

4.d5 d6 5.♘c3 exd5 6.cxd5 g6!



The bishop takes over control of the central square e5 and thereby assumes an obligation to prevent the forward march of the white pawn mass (which might perhaps assume the form of a pawn pair on e4 and f4).

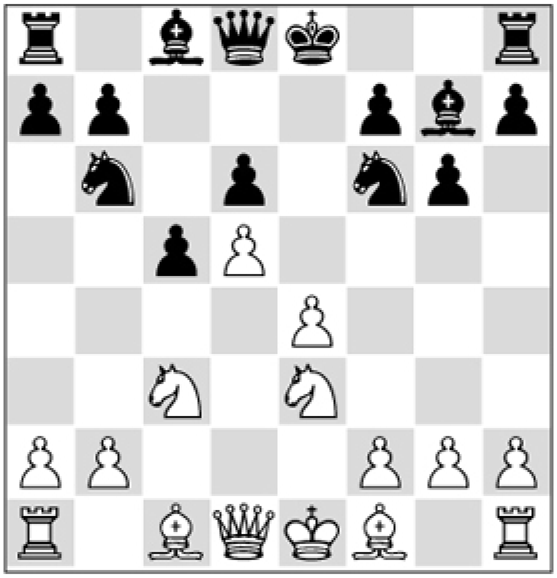
7.♞d2!

Many readers will find it regrettable that White as it were side-steps the problem of restraint that Marshall has set, instead of attempting a solution with, say, 7.e4 ♗g7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.0-0 a6 10.a4 ♖e8 11.h3. But I considered the position after 7.e4, etc., to be more or less balanced, and in particular I thought the possibility 11…b6 followed by …♖a7-e7 had to be taken into account. For that matter, Black also could have played …♗g4 already at the 10th move, with …♗xf3 to follow. What then could have been done to counter the restraining set-up of …♕c7 followed by the doubling of the rooks on the e-file? The kindly reader, in light of all this, will understand that with the text move I was playing for complications in preference to setting on a path with 7.e4 that probably would have led to a position in which both parties, after the maximal deployment of their forces, suddenly would have been unable to proceed further (the so-called ‘dead point’!).

7…♞bd7 8.♞c4 ♞b6 9.e4 ♝g7

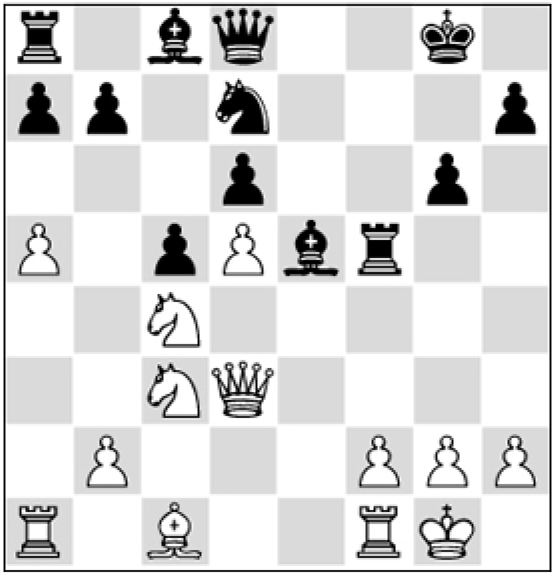
Here, 9…♘xc4 10.♗xc4 ♗g7 could have been played. After, e.g., 11.0-0 0-0 12.h3 ♖e8 13.♕d3 a6 14.a4 ♗d7, Black would have been in a position to complete his development with …♕c7 and the doubling of the rooks on the e-file.

10.♘e3!



Marshall had not reckoned with this move: White is now planning a2-a4-a5 followed by the repositioning of his knight on c4. From this point forward White appears to have the advantage.

10…0-0 11.♗d3 ♘h5 12.0-0 ♗e5 13.a4 ♘f4 14.a5 ♘d7 15.♘c4 ♘xd3 16.♕xd3 f5 17.exf5 ♖xf5

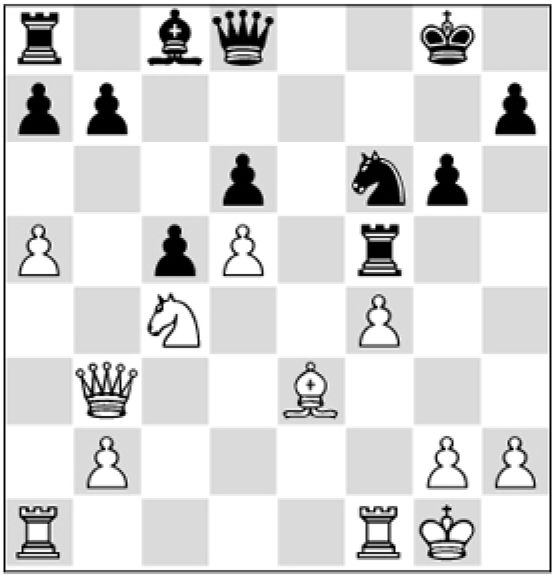


18.f4

Since White allowed his opponent a free hand, Black retained the possibility of rolling up the white *pawn* center. But the first player remains strongly centralized (♘c4!) and has chances on the queenside as well.

Instead of the combinative move played, 18.♘e4 was also very good.

18…♝d4+ 19.♝e3 ♝xc3 20.♛xc3 ♞f6 21.♛b3

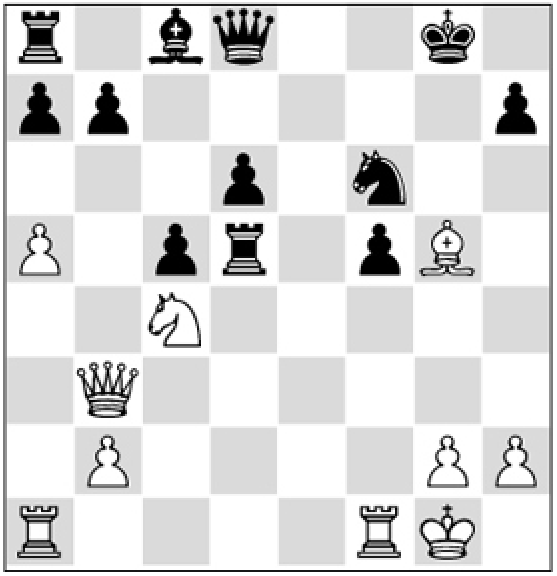


White gets compensation for the d-pawn *inter alia* in the fact that the black queenside will find it hard to develop.

21…♜xd5

On 21…♘xd5, 22.♖ae1! would follow, preventing 22…♗e6 because of the reply 23.♗xc5. Black would then be quite helpless: White could win with (among other lines) ♗d2 and the doubling of the rooks on the e-file.

22.f5! gxf5 23.♝g5



This move contains within it a singular point. For if 23…♗e6 (White has to reckon with this counter most of all), then 24.♕xb7 (threatening 25.♗xf6, winning a piece) 24…♖c8 25.♖ae1!, when the bishop has to relinquish its protection of one of the rooks, after which 26.♗xf6 wins the now unprotected rook.

23…♜d4 24.♞b6+ c4 25.♛c3 axb6 26.♛xd4 ♚g7 27.♜ae1 bxa5 28.♜e8!

The quickest way to the win.

28…♛xe8 29.♛xf6+ ♚g8 30.♝h6

Black resigned.

Game 27

Friedrich Sämisch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1923 (7)

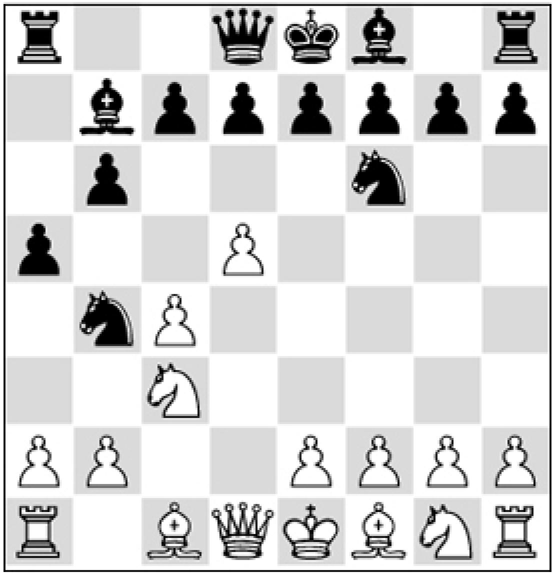
After the very hypermodern-looking opening moves White had the somewhat freer game:

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 b6 3.♞c3 ♝b7 4.♛c2 ♞c6!? 5.d5

Or 5.♘f3 d6 6.d5 ♘b8, similar to the game, although in this case White would have been able to get a better game after the further moves g2-g3, ♗g2, and possibly ♘d4, than he had after the text.

5…♞b4 6.♛d1 a5

In order after White’s possible a2-a3 to secure a carefree retreat via a6 to c5.



7.e4!

Here and in what follows, Sämisch shows a force of will that glows with a scientific earnestness. How many others in the same position would have resisted the temptation to chase off the unpleasant knight at b4 despite the fact that this would have entailed a weakening of their own position?

7…e5 8.g3 g6 9.♗g2 ♗g7 10.♘ge2 0-0 11.0-0 d6 12.f4 exf4 13.gxf4 ♖e8 14.♘g3 ♘d7

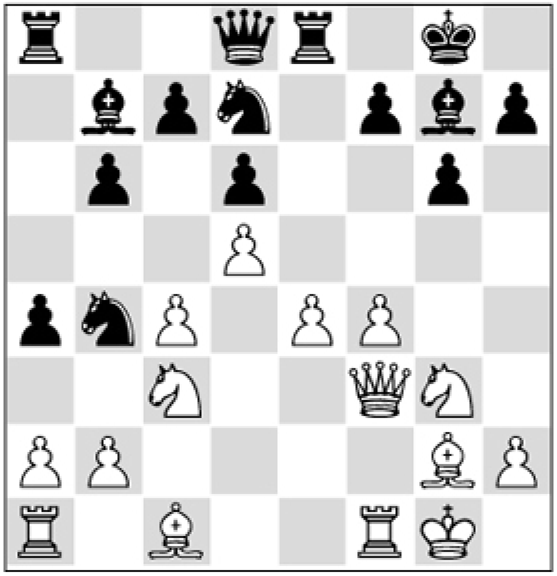
The white center is now hemmed in. Black now seeks to associate this more passive form of restraint with an attack on the outermost queenside (cf. the preliminary discussion).

Incidentally, we owe the careful reader an explanation. Up to this point we have deliberately ignored the existence of the black e-file and have considered the restraining action only as the effect of the long black diagonal (g7-c3). Is this view correct? Answer: from a higher standpoint, unquestionably yes, for the e-file plays almost no role at all – the e4-square is well over-protected. The real actors are, on the one hand, the white center, inspired by its lust to expand, and on the other (as will soon be shown) the black diagonal, proficient in both restraint and attack!

15.♕f3

The fact that Sämisch has left the b4-knight alone elicits our approval; but allowing the knight access to his c2-square we consider superfluous. Central play with 15.♗e3 was called for; e.g., 15…f5? 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♗d4, or 15…♕f6 (to prevent 16.♗d4) 16.e5! dxe5 17.♘ce4 ♕d8 18.f5, with a strong attacking position.

15…a4!



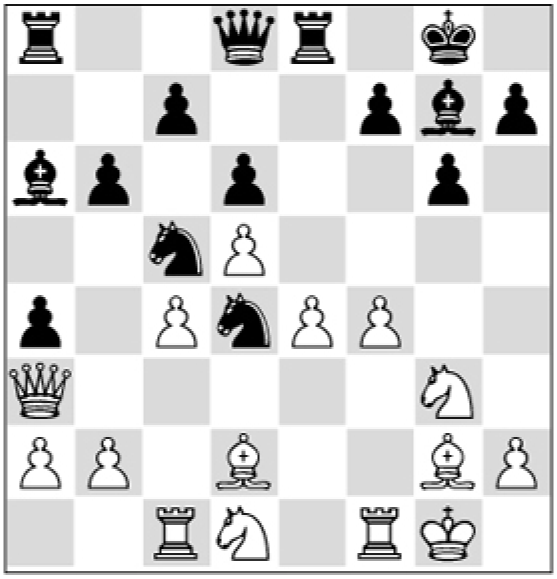
The diagonal now exerts its influence (with the threat 16…a3).

16.♝d2 ♝a6 17.♞d1 ♞c2 18.♜c1 ♞d4 19.♛a3

There was no good square for the queen.

19…♞c5

The breakthrough 19…b5 was sufficiently prepared and could therefore have been played immediately.



20.♘f2 f5

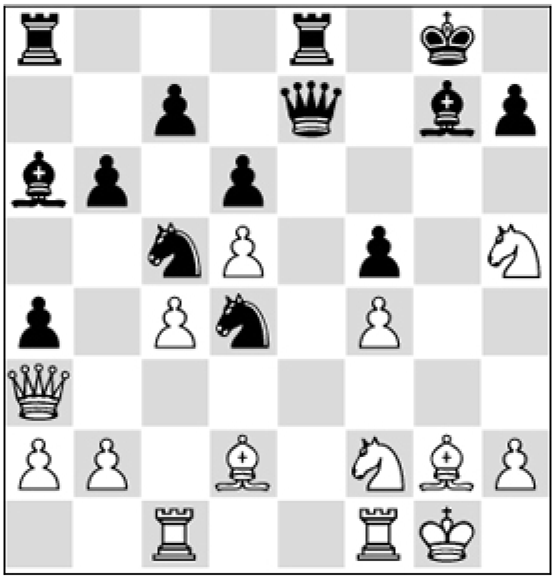
A false trail – the white queenside, as already emphasized, was the correct path; e.g., 20…b5! 21.♗b4 (wrongly considered the refutation by Maroczy) 21…bxc4 22.♗xc5 dxc5 23.♕xc5 ♕d6! 24.♕xd6 cxd6, when the pawn on b2 cannot be held and Black has the advantage.

21.exf5 gxf5 22.♘h5!

So as, if now 22…♘e2+ and 23… ♘xc1, to be able afterwards to get the advantage with the attacking move ♕g3.

22…♕e7

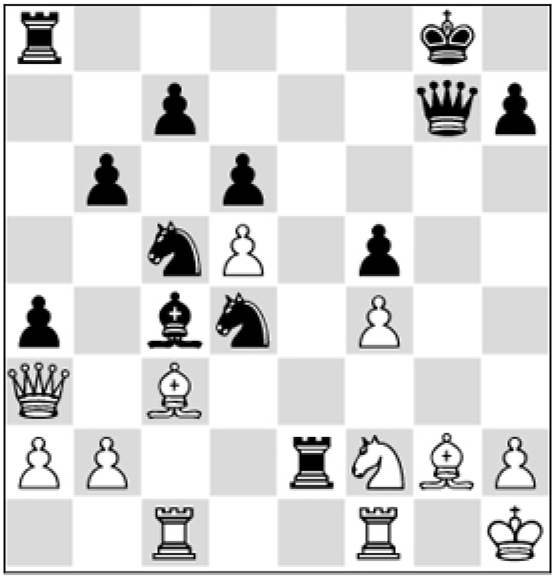
The defense 22…♗h8 followed by …♔f7 was also playable.



23.♘xg7

After this White should again have had the inferior game. With 23.♔h1 ♗h8! 24.♕h3 he would have kept the balance.

23…♕xg7 24.♔h1 ♖e2 25.♗c3 ♗xc4



Now Black threatens the queen sacrifice 26…♕xg2+ 27.♔xg2 ♗xd5+ 28.♔h3 ♖e3+ 29.♔h4 ♘f3+ 30.♔h5 ♗f7+, etc. On 26.♖g1 there would follow 26…♔f7; e.g., 27.♗f3 ♕xg1+! and 28…♘xf3, with advantage to Black. But what is most interesting in this situation is that this queen sacrifice should have re-appeared later in a *modified form* (cf. the note to Black’s 26th move).

26.♝f3 ♚f8?

A blunder in time pressure. The queen sacrifice still would have been very strong; e.g., 26…♘xf3 27.♗xg7 ♗xd5, when White is just about helpless, as in the line 28.♗h6 ♔f7 29.♖cd1 ♖d2! 30.♖xd2 ♘xd2+ 31.♔g1 ♖g8+ 32.♗g5 ♘f3+ 33.♔g2 ♘xg5+ 34.♔g3, and now 34…♘f3+ 35.♔h3 ♘d2 36.♖d1 ♗g2+ 37.♔h4 ♘f3+ 38.♔h5 ♘e6 39.♕e3 ♖g6, or 39.♘h3 ♖g4 and wins.

If 28.♔g2 (instead of 28.♗h6) 28…♔xg7 29.♔h3 ♖e6 (30.♖g1+ ♔f7), Black, at only a slight material deficit, would have maintained a very strong attack that in all likelihood would have proven decisive. Hence Black could have decided the game very elegantly –the many quiet moves! – at his 26th turn.

27.♝xd4?

A swift reciprocation for the time-pressure mistake just made, which for its part is of course to be explained as due to lack of time as well. 27.♖cd1 ♘d3 28.♗xd4 ♕xd4 29.♗xe2 ♘xf2+ 30.♖xf2 ♕xf2 31.♗xc4 would have decided matters in favor of White.

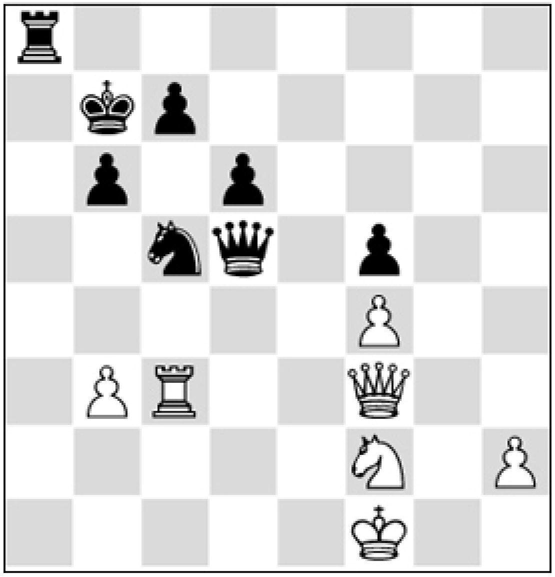
27…♛xd4 28.♝xe2 ♝xe2 29.♛h3

White hardly has anything better.

29…♛xd5+ 30.♚g1 ♝xf1 31.♛h6+ ♚e8 32.♚xf1 ♚d7 33.♛xh7+ ♚c6

Black should now win without difficulty.

34.♛h3 ♜g8 35.b4 axb3 36.axb3 ♚b7 37.♜c3 ♜a8 38.♛f3



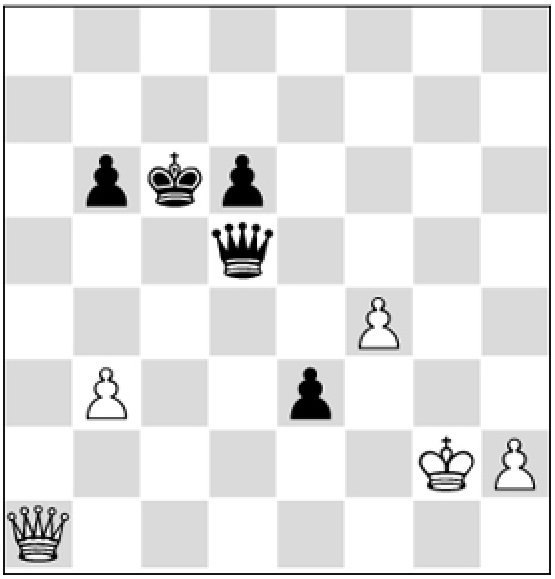
38…♖a1+

This makes the win considerably more difficult for Black; the rook should have remained at a8 for the time being. The immediate 38…♘e4 would have won easily.

39.♚g2 ♘e4 40.♘xe4 fxe4 41.♖xc7+

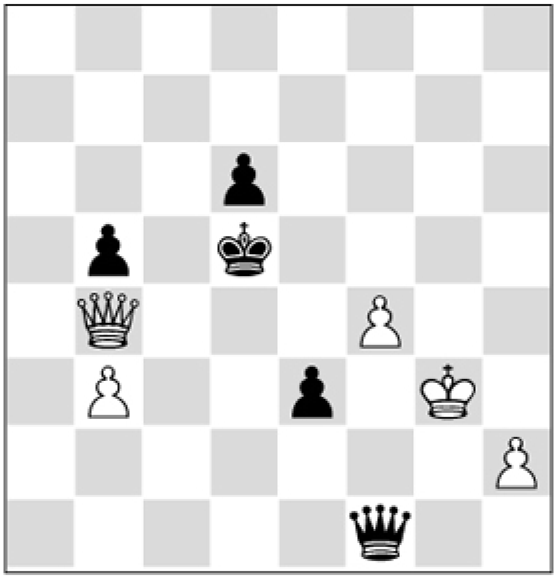
The resource that was made possible by 38…♖a1+.

41…♚xc7 42.♛c3+ ♚b7 43.♛g7+ ♚c6 44.♛xa1 e3+



There now follows a most instructive queen ending, in which Black stands somewhat better.

45.♚g3 ♛d2 46.♛a8+ ♚c5 47.♛a3+ ♚d5 48.♛a4 ♛e1+ 49.♚g4 ♛e2+ 50.♚g3 b5 51.♛b4 ♛f1



52.h4

Drawing chances were afforded by 52.f5!; e.g., 52…♔e5 53.♕c3+ ♔e4 54.♕c6+ and a draw.

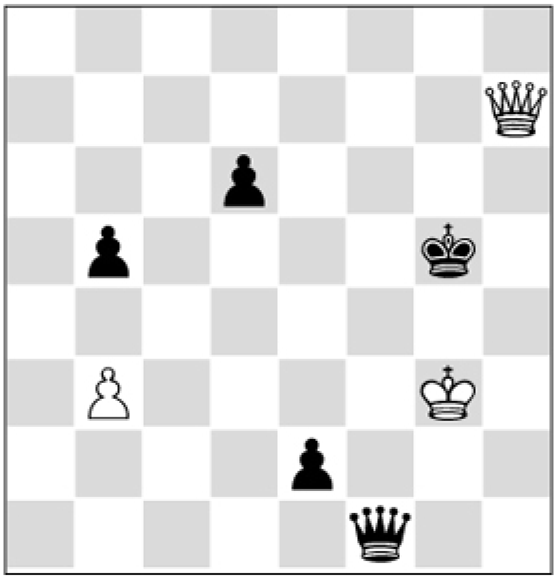
52…♛f2+ 53.♚g4 ♛g2+ 54.♚f5 ♛c2+ 55.♚g4 ♚e6

White had overlooked this move in his calculations; if now 56.♕xb5, then 56…♕g2+ 57.♔h5 ♕d5+ and wins.

56.f5+ ♛xf5+ 57.♚g3 e2 58.♛c3 ♛f1 59.♛e3+ ♚f7 60.♛a7+ ♚g6 61.h5+

The flame of perpetual check will from time to time be fed by fresh ‘wood’.

61…♚xh5 62.♛h7+ ♚g5



Now the king escapes to b2, but this flight square must first be secured by setting the ‘scene’ (the pawn on d5) – in plain terms, a backdrop.

63.♛g7+ ♚f5 64.♛f7+ ♚e5 65.♛e7+ ♚d5 66.♛b7+ ♚d4 67.♛b6+ ♚e4

At this stage the flight to b2 would be pointless.

68.♛c6+ d5!

The backdrop!

69.♛e6+ ♚d4 70.♛b6+ ♚d3 71.♛xb5+ ♚c2

White resigned.

If Black’s pawn stood at d6 instead of d5, 72.♕c4+ would draw.

To sum up: After 23.♔h1, instead of 23.♘xg7, Black could hardly have taken advantage of the e-file. By contrast, the *correct* advance on the queenside (as per the preliminary discussion), 19…b5 or 20…b5, would have given Black a fairly easy win.

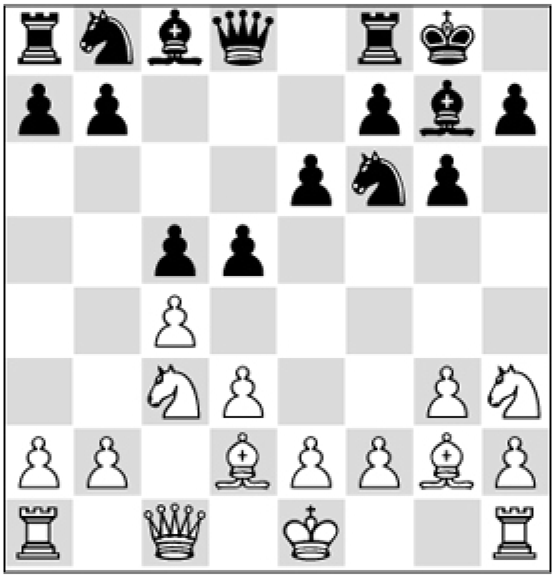
Game 28

Victor Berger
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927

1.c4 ♞f6 2.♞c3 c5 3.g3 g6 4.♝g2 ♝g7 5.d3 0-0 6.♝d2 e6

I do not fear the threat 7.♕c1 and 8.♗h6, so I omit the unimaginative …h7-h6 followed by …♔h7 or suchlike.

7.♛c1 d5 8.♞h3



Decidedly a fine idea! White looks to force a decision in the center with ♘f4. And he very properly does not allow 8.♗h6 d4 9.♘d1 ♕a5+.

8…d4 9.♘d1 ♞a6 10.a3 ♛e8 11.b3 e5 12.♘b2 ♝g4

To prevent White from castling, but today I think 12…♗f5 would have been better. However this was difficult to discern over the board.

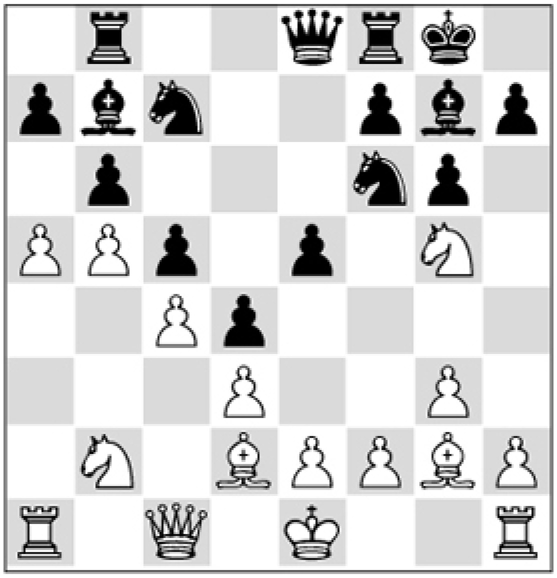
13.♘g5

Very skilfully played. The knight hovers around the e4-square and at the same time evades attack by the bishop, so White is ready to press forward with his energetic advance on the far queenside. In other words: in the center White seeks to counter the threatened advance …e5-e4 more ‘passively’, but to this passive defensive play there is added a sharp attack on the outermost queen’s wing. (Cf. the preliminary discussion.)

13…♜b8 14.b4 b6 15.b5 ♞c7 16.a4 ♝c8!

To exchange the bishop at g2.

17.a5 ♝b7



18.f3

Simpler would be 18.♗xb7 ♖xb7 19.axb6 axb6 20.0-0. The a-file would not be relevant in the near term, but it would have required constant attention on the part of Black and would therefore have helped divert forces from the kingside.

18…♘e6 19.a6

Just a few months ago I thought this ‘closing-up’ move was playable, but today I rather think that White’s defense, entirely passive in character from this point, has to collapse sooner or later. 19.axb6 should have been played.

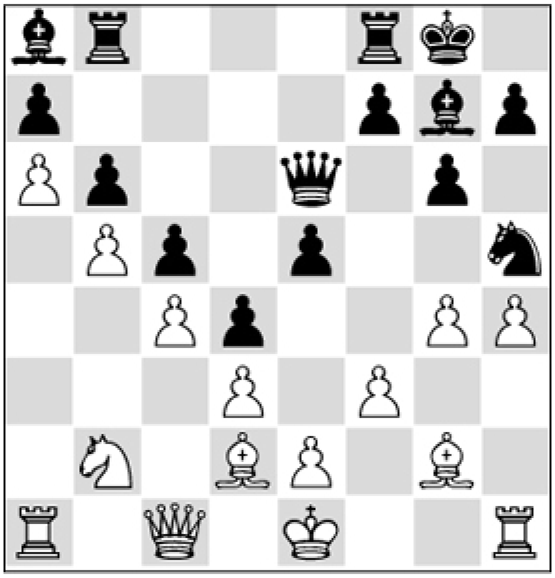
19…♗a8!

Placing the bishop in the corner where it is out of moves; but Black is hoping for the breakthrough …e5-e4 (after preparation).

20.h4

A further weakening. Comparatively better was 20.♘d1 and ♘f2, already directed against the …e5-e4 advance. But this preventive tactic would have been of little benefit, as White’s defensive posture is too passive.

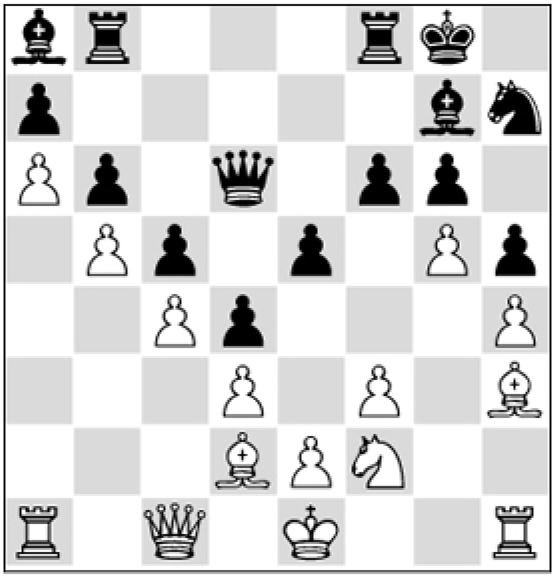
20…♘h5 21.♘xe6 ♕xe6 22.g4



22…♘f6

Here, the pawn sacrifice 22…♘f4 23.♗xf4 exf4 24.♕xf4 ♗e5 25.♕d2 ♕d6 and …♗f4 could have been considered.

23.♗h3 ♕d6 24.♘d1 h5 25.g5 ♘h7 26.♘f2 f6



27.gxf6

A bit better here is 27.♖g1, when, after 27…fxg5, 28.hxg5 would follow, preserving the queen’s bishop so that it can cover the breakthrough point f4, which in the actual game does not occur. But on 27.♖g1, 27…f5 would follow, when Black brings all his pieces into contact with e4: e.g., the knight via f8, e6, c7 and e8 to d6; the queen would stand best on c7, the rooks along the e-file. Then at last the breakthrough …e5-e4 would come with decisive effect.

27…♝xf6 28.♝g5 ♝xg5 29.hxg5 ♜f4!

Cf. the first part of the preceding note.

30.♜g1 ♜bf8

The win of a pawn with 30…♕e7 31.♕d2 ♘xg5 32.0-0-0 would be miserable.

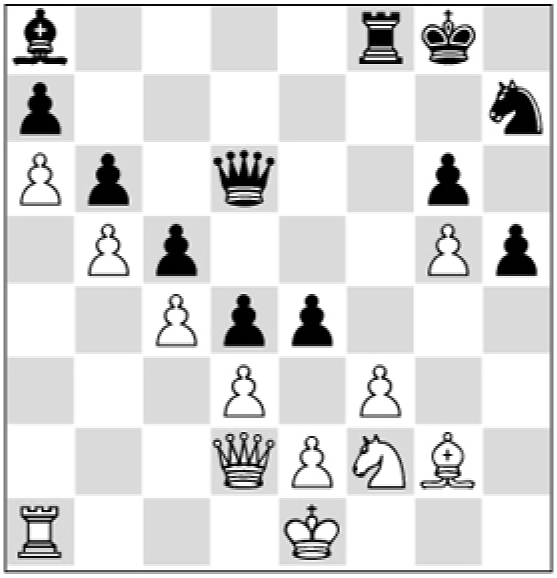
31.♝f1 ♜h4!

Preventing 32.♘h3 because of 32…e4! 33.dxe4 ♕h2, winning a piece.

32.♛d2 ♜h2! 33.♜g2

Forced. The rook on h2 exerts too much pressure.

33…♜xg2 34.♝xg2 e4!



The point of the rook-exchange combination.

35.dxe4 ♛g3

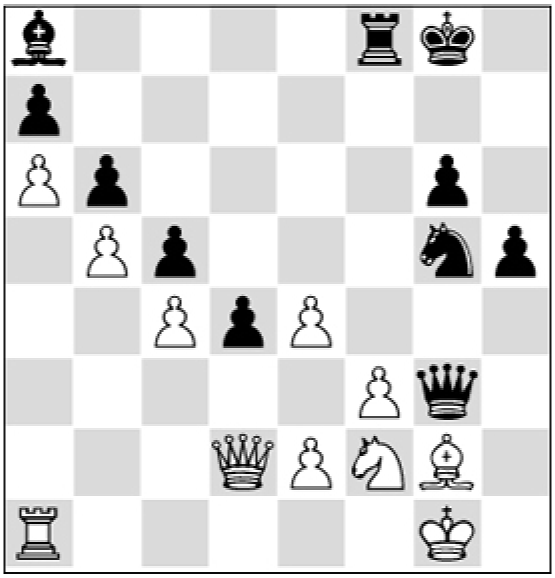
The breakthrough becomes a break-in.

36.♚f1

If 36.♗f1, then 36…♗xe4.

36…♞xg5 37.♚g1

If 37.♘h1, then 37…♘xe4 38.♘xg3 ♘xd2+ and …♘xc4, when Black’s encapsulated bishop now has the d5-square at its disposal.



37…♖xf3

Here I deliberated for about twenty minutes on whether 37…h4 would have won more quickly. But after 38.♘h1 ♘h3+ 39.♔f1 ♕h2 40.♗xh3 ♕xh1+ 41.♔f2 ♕xa1 the attack 42.♕h6 follows, with complications unpleasant for Black. But 41…♕xh3 42.♖g1 ♕h2+ 43.♖g2 ♕f4 also would have won easily.

38.♕xg5 ♕xg5 39.exf3 ♕e3 40.♖d1 ♕b3 41.♖c1 g5 42.♔h2 ♕e3 43.♖f1 ♕e2 44.♘h3 d3 45.♘f2 d2 46.♔g1 ♕xc4 47.♖d1 ♕c1 48.♗h3 g4 49.fxg4 ♗xe4

At last the bishop emerges.

50.gxh5 ♗f3

White resigned.

3. Restraint of a qualitative majority (especially a chain majority)

We begin with an explanation that should clarify the concept of a *qualitative* majority. As I wrote in my treatise *The Blockade,* a majority of, say, three pawns against two must of course be placed under restraint. In this sense we must also speak of a majority in those positions where the pawn preponderance on one of the wings is of an ideal nature.

In my game vs. **Bernstein** at Karlsbad 1923 (I had the white pieces), after the moves…

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.e3 0-0 6.a3 a6 7.c5 c6 8.b4 ♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♕c7 10.♕c2 e5 11.0-0-0! e4

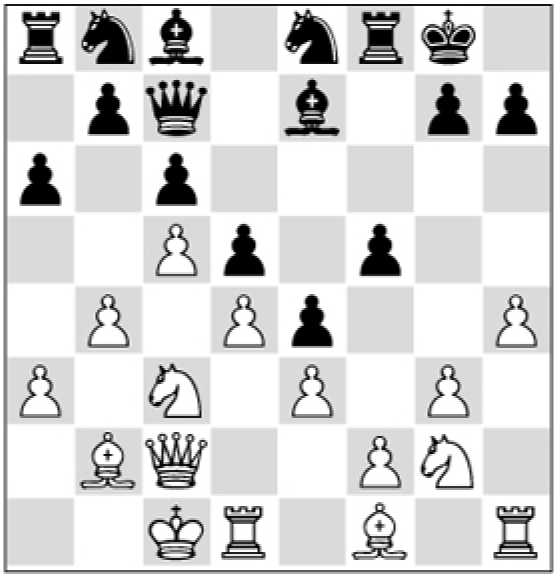
… the game arrived at a position in which White had the ideal majority on the queenside and Black had the same on the kingside. Why is this so? Because Black's pawn at e4 is 'more' than the pawn at e3, while the pawn on c5 is more than the pawn on c6. Left to his own devices Black would go over to the attack with …f7-f5, …g7-g5, and …f5-f4, which, in terms of vehemence, would scarcely be inferior to the onrush of a real majority. Here, too, a wedge formation (with …f4-f3) is threatened, as well as the opening of lines (through …fxe3) and a potential win later on of the pawn on e3, to be assailed 'sideways' and not frontally.

Meanwhile, to recognize a majority as such implies undertaking something against it. Accordingly, there followed:

12.♘h4 ♘b8

To prevent 13.♘f5.

13.g3 ♘e8 14.♘g2 f5 15.h4



… and the king's wing, which appeared ready to advance, is now paralysed. After a few more moves the restraint had solidified into a blockade!

Thus far the discussion in *The Blockade*. To this I should like to add that the superiority of Black's e4-pawn over its antagonist at e3 is based on the fact that the pawn on e3 became blockaded on its way *toward the center* (a painful matter for a center pawn!), whereas the pawn on e4 has crossed the center line.

The strategy of restraint to be used in the case of a qualitative majority has been shown so clearly in Games 13 and 27 that we are content to simply refer to them. But our pedagogical conscience requires that we explain in more detail a stratagem that so far we have not discussed, namely, 'the king's flight as a palliative measure'.

The following battle scenario can be considered typical: a qualitative majority that has been slowly rolling forward involves the smashing of the enemy pawn center. But this disintegration would also entail the exposure of the enemy king, which therefore is doubly unpleasant for the opponent. The palliative measure lies in holding up the advancing majority long enough for one's own king to make its escape. The attack is accordingly not prevented but rather reduced in its effect. In Games 29 and 30, the procedure we have described can be clearly seen.

Game 29

Louis van Vliet

Aron Nimzowitsch

Ostend 1907 (3)

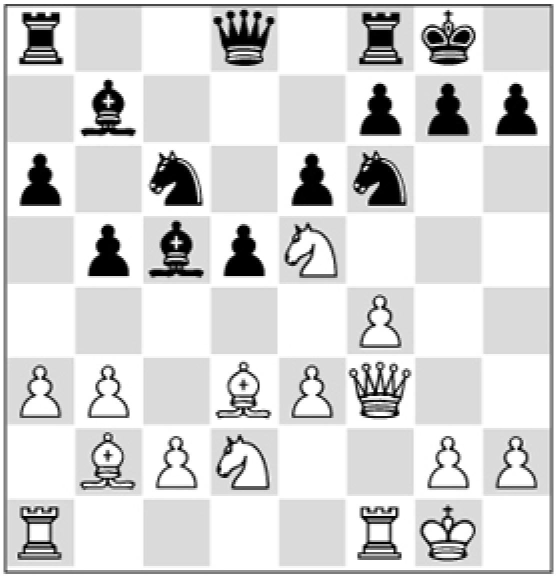
This game has already appeared in my booklet *The Blockade*. Since, however, a fresh examination of the game has resulted in a partial revision of what was said there, we discuss it here as well.

In the opening, Van Vliet announces his intention to apply pressure against the e5-square.

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.e3 e6 4.b3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.a3 ♗d6 7.♗b2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.♘e5 ♗b7 10.♘d2 a6 11.f4

Now I considered it the right time for a counter-action, hence:

11…b5 12.dxc5! ♗xc5 13.♕f3



Anyone versed in the strategy of centralization will portray White’s maneuver 12.dxc5 and 13.♕f3 as an attempt to control the now-vacated central squares with pieces and in due course to occupy them as well. It is clear that Black will not look on passively but for his part will fight for control of the central squares.

13…♘d7

Attacking the knight on e5, which, thanks to 12.dxc5, is *uprooted*, an action which gives the appearance of being completely logical. And yet the move is not the best: A central knight – for the knight at f6 is a central knight in the fullest sense of the word, as it works to control e4 – which on top of everything else also helps secure his own castled position, should not be disturbed except in case of dire need, and such a need is not found here. A solid central action (instead of 13…♘d7) was offered by 13…♖c8. In my game with Duz-Khotimirsky at Karlsbad (1907), there followed 14.♕g3 ♘xe5! 15.♗xe5 ♗d6 16.♗d4 ♕e7! 17.b4 g6! 18.♕g5, when Black could have equalized comfortably with 18…♘d7 19.♕xe7 ♗xe7 20.e4 ♘f6.

It is interesting to note that instead of 13…♘d7 the immediate advance 13…d4 could be considered. True, here this attempt would founder on 14.♘xc6 dxe3 15.♘e4! ♘xe4 16.♘xd8 e2+ 17.♔h1 exf1♕+ 18.♖xf1 ♘f2+ 19.♕xf2 ♗xf2 20.♘xb7. But despite all its shortcomings, this line is instructive: the …d5-d4 advance must first be prepared, so this abortive attempt tells us. Hence: 13…♖c8!. And if

14.♕g3, then either 14…♘xe5, as I played against Duz, or 14…d4 15.e4 ♘xe5 16.fxe5 ♘d7 17.♘f3, with chances for both sides. After the text move Black gets an exceedingly difficult game.

14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♕g3! ♘f6

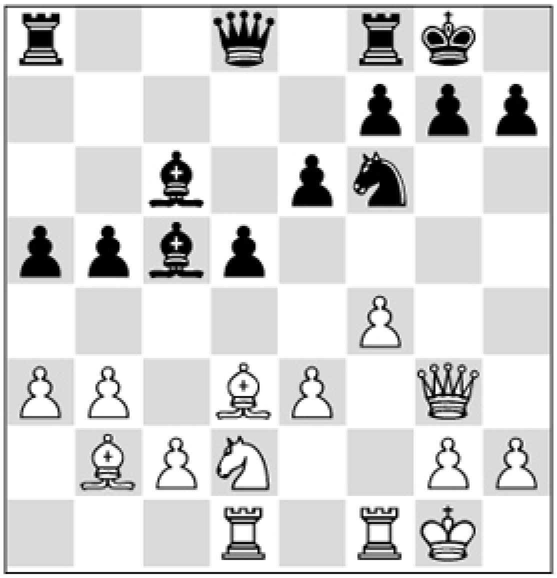
If 15…f6, then 16.♕h3! f5, whereupon White occupies the central squares with 17.b4 ♗e7 18.♘b3 ♗f6 19.♘d4. But Black, in the variation given, would seem able to put up a robust resistance with 19…♕c8 followed by …g7-g6 and …♘b6. 15…f6 therefore seems to be the right move. After the move played, Black's game is such that after any sequence of moves – it need not be precisely the strategic plan indicated above – White would maintain a grip on the position.

16.♖ad1

A really colorless move, it goes without saying. The central strategy 16.b4 followed by ♘b3 was the obvious plan.

16…a5

Black plays at maximum energy. Now b3-b4 is no longer possible and a3 appears weak. Yet it is very difficult to make an impression on White's position, as the first player has a powerfully centralized game.



17.♕h3

Stereotyped play. Playing according to 'system' one would more likely have considered the 'pawn sacrifice for purposes of blockade', namely, 17.♘f3! ♗xe3+ 18.♔h1, when White will occupy the central squares d4 and e5. Black’s extra pawn would have little value, immobile as it is, and in fact would have only a *negative* effect, that is, in blocking off his own pieces. But as we said before, 17.♕h3 too is very strong.

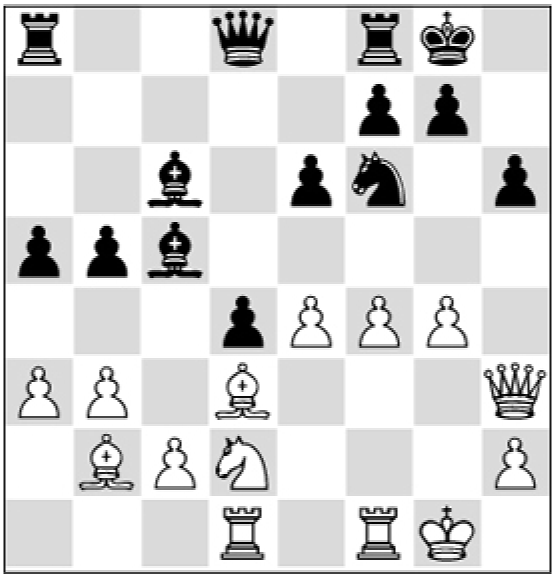
17…h6

To provoke g2-g4 and thus sharpen the tempo of the game. Another possibility was 17…d4; e.g., 18.e4 e5 19.fxe5 ♗d7 (not 19…♘d7 because of 20.e6) 20.♕g3 ♘g4 21.♖de1, although in that event White’s game would no doubt be preferable.

18.g4 d4

To force the interlocking of the pawns, a stratagem we will come to know later on as an important component of the blockade under the heading ‘From the Workshop of the Blockade’.

19.e4



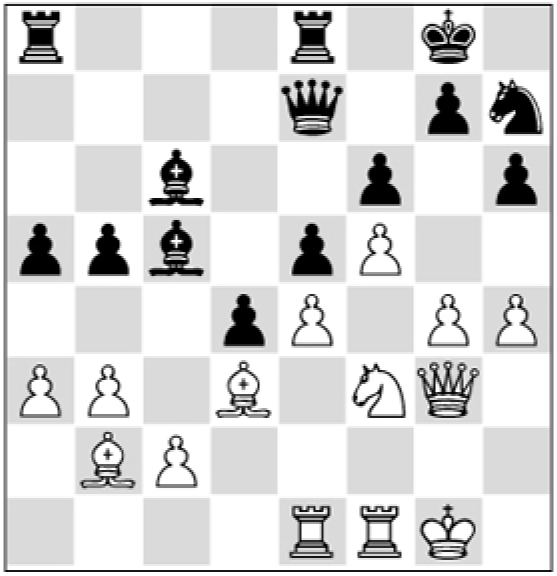
19…♛d7

To answer 20.g5 with 20…e5. But the question is whether 19…e5 might not have been better. For instance: 20.fxe5 ♘d7 21.♘f3 ♕e7 22.♕g3 ♖ae8 23.g5 h5; even in this line, however, Black’s position does not inspire confidence.

20.♖de1 e5 21.f5 ♞h7

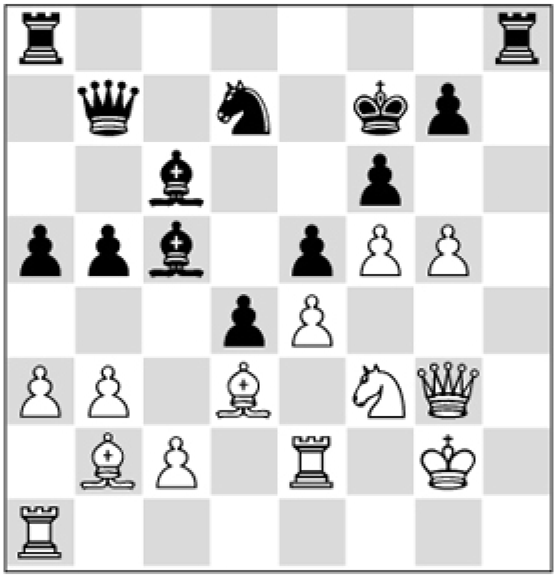
Black resists the threatened g4-g5 (after a queen move and h2-h4) with all his might, but even at this point he is planning the later flight of his king. Now, an investigation of the following question would be of the greatest strategic interest: would it not have been simpler to prepare for this flight with …♕e7, …♘d7, and …f7-f6, and would not this arrangement have saved two tempi compared with the maneuver in the game (for in the game the knight makes the round trip …♘f6-h7-f8-d7)? Answer: after 21…♕e7, 22.♘f3 ♘d7 23.♘h4! would have followed, when 23…f6 and the flight of the king would have been prevented. (Besides, the threat 24.f6 followed by ♘f5 would have been unpleasant.) With the maneuver we warmly recommended in the preliminary discussion, namely, ‘Keep restraining until the king has escaped’, speed is much less important than urging on the enemy pawn storm, for it is in the nature of a pawn advance that, for some time at least, one’s pieces are pushed into the background and squares are taken from them by the pawns. This fact will be most welcome to us, anyway, in the case of a planned flight by the king. Cf. the note to the 24th move.

22.♘f3 ♕e7 23.♕g3 ♖fe8 24.h4 f6



The white pawn storm has cost White an important square for his pieces: now, ♘h4 is no longer possible.

25.♖a1 ♕b7 26.♖fe1 ♔f7 27.♖e2 ♖h8! 28.♔g2 ♘f8 29.g5 hxg5 30.hxg5 ♘d7



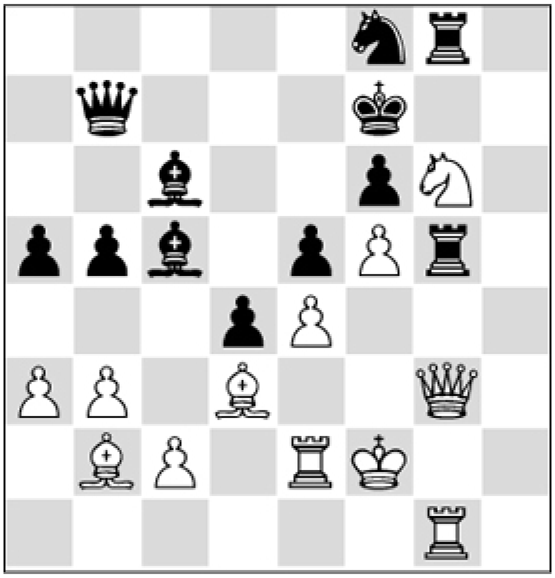
Black’s position is now fairly well consolidated: a resting place at d6 (or c8) beckons the black king and he has control of the h-file. In the endgame coming up, the a3-pawn will be a convenient target for attack. Yet, as in the previous phase of the game, it will be very difficult to make progress.

31.gxf6

To be able to occupy g6 with the knight. We consider this plan quite playable and see no reason to censure the move (the tournament book assigns it a question mark). It may be that 31.♖g1 looks better, but what would there be for White to do after 31…♔e7 followed by …♖ae8 and …♔d8-c8? And a3 cannot be protected…

No, 31.gxf6 is not to be criticized; White’s position still looks very good, but the worms are gnawing at it and neither 31.gxf6 nor 31.♖g1 can alter this to any significant extent.

31…gxf6 32.♘h4! ♜ag8 33.♘g6 ♜h5 34.♔f2 ♝f8 35.♖g1 ♜g5



All quite correctly played by Black: White’s occupation of g6 can hardly be maintained. Possible, too, by the way, was 35…♘xg6 36.fxg6+ ♔g7 and …♖h8.

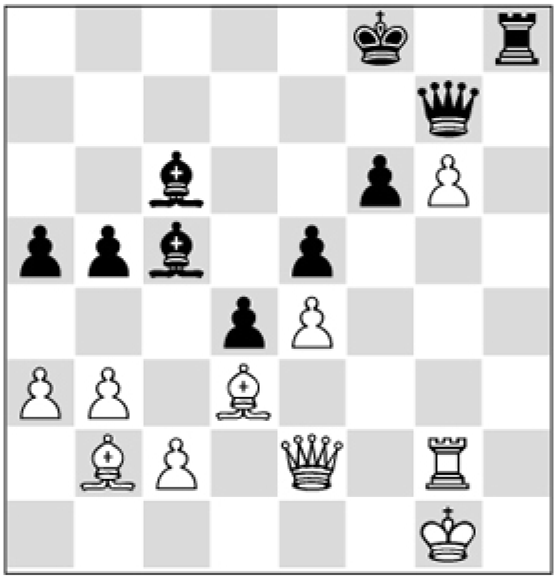
36.♕h4

36.♕h2 would seem to be indispensable here.

36…♜xg1

Disdaining the fortuitous alternate solution 36…♘xg6 (which would not have been playable had White chosen 36.♕h2) and going into the main line of play.

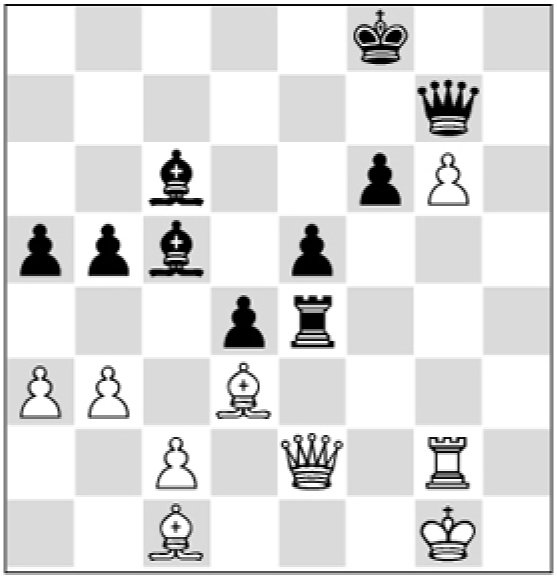
37.♚xg1 ♞xg6 38.♕h5 ♚f8 39.fxg6 ♕g7 40.♜g2 ♜h8 41.♕e2



41…♜h4!?

On the wrong track (but which I still considered correct in 1925 – see *The Blockade*). Black mistakenly believes that the pawn on e4 cannot be held because of the discovered check by the bishop that is hanging over the position. Instead, the game was to be decided by straightforward attacking play, directed against g6 – namely with 41…♖h6 42.♕g4 ♗d7 43.♕g3 ♗e8, winning.

42.♝c1! ♜xe4!?



43.♛d2?

He does not see that Dame Fortune is smiling upon him. But Teichmann and I and all the others looking on were blind to the saving clause. White could probably reach a draw with the queen sacrifice 43.♕xe4 ♗xe4 44.♗xe4, with the threat 45.♖h2 and ♖h7. The check 44…d3+ would lead to nothing on account of the reply 45.♔f1. After the text move, on the other hand, it is all over for White.

43…♜h4 44.♛xa5 ♛d7 45.g7+ ♚g8 46.♝c4+ bxc4 47.♛xc5 ♜h1+

White resigned.

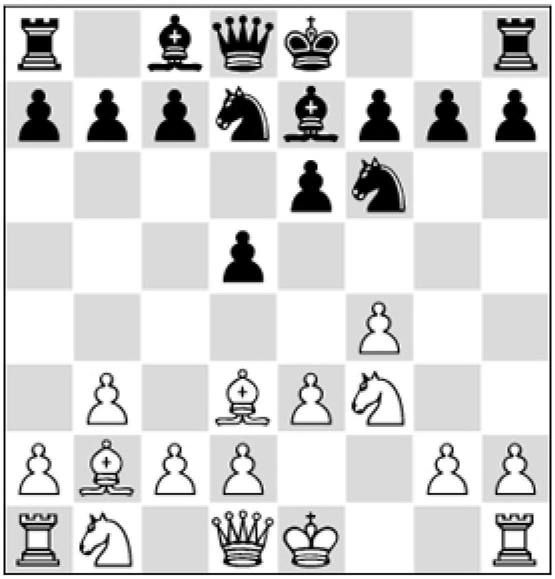
A assignment for the reader: let him take the black pieces in the position after 30…♘d7. Have an opponent of about equal strength now play 31.♖g1. Try to hold the black position. Begin, as indicated, with 31…♔e7 and follow up with, perhaps, …♖ae8 and …♔d8-c8. The crux of the problem, however, is: at what pace and under *what* compulsion will the exchanges, which are favorable for you, be carried out? Can your opponent push the pawn to g7 without in the end allowing exchanges? Or will the game slowly but surely find its way to an endgame in which Black is the better placed? This exercise will prove interesting and at the same time will be very instructive.

Game 30

Aron Nimzowitsch
Victor Berger
London 1927 (4)
(Imperial Chess Club)

A rather harmless-looking ‘Reversed Dutch’ which from moves 6-10 takes a course that, even if insufficient, certainly, is determined to proceed along unusual paths.

1.b3 ♞f6 2.♝b2 e6 3.f4 d5 4.♞f3 ♝e7 5.e3 ♞bd7 6.♝d3



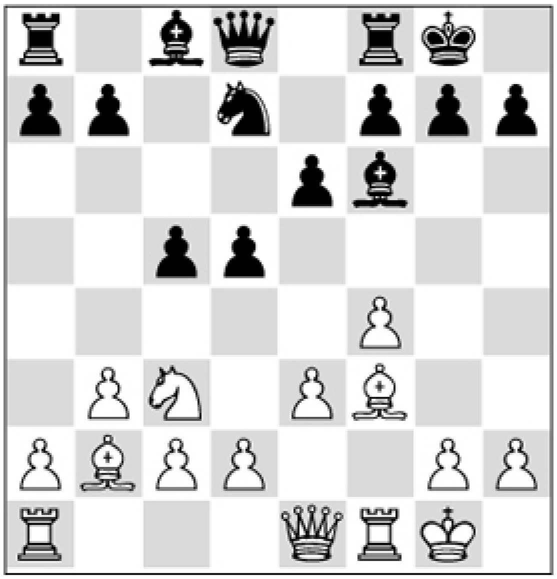
In order to castle if Black plays 6…♘c5. After 7.0-0 ♘xd3 8.cxd3 there follows d3-d4, d2-d3, ♘e5 and play along the c-file.

6…♘e4 7.♘e5 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xe5 9.♗xe4 ♘d7 10.♗f3 ♗f6

The game appears to be headed for a draw.

11.♘c3 c5 12.♕e1

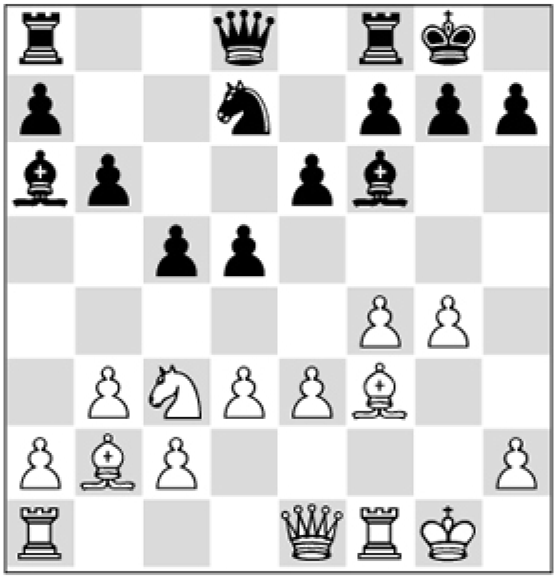
12.♕e2 d4 13.♘e4? d3! 14.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.♗xf6 dxe2 and wins.



12…b6

We prefer 12…♘b6, preparing …e6-e5.

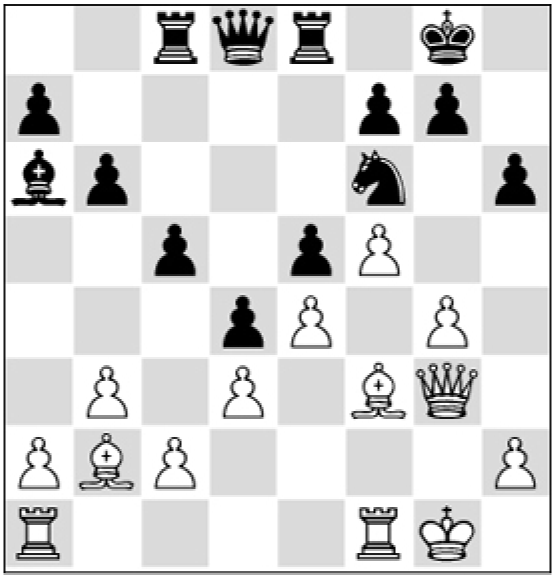
13.g4 ♗a6 14.d3



14…d4

This merely leads to a stiffening of the pawn chain at a point where Black should strive precisely to open up the game. Correct was 14…♖c8 followed potentially by …c5-c4.

15.♘e4 ♖c8 16.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17.e4 e5 18.f5 h6 19.♕g3 ♖e8?



The position now bears a certain resemblance to what we saw in the previous game at the 21st move.

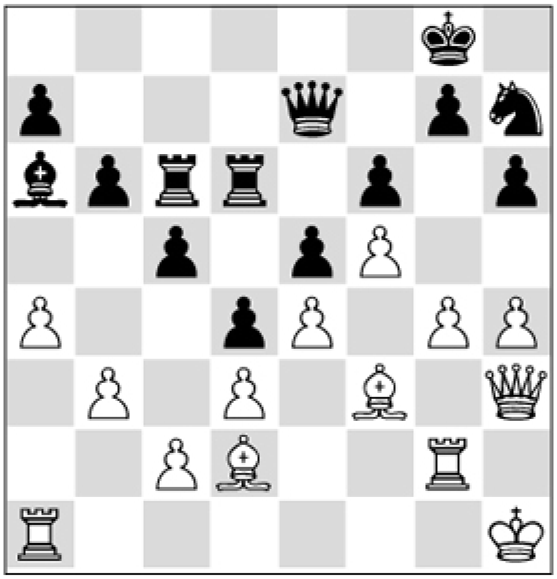
Here as there, the flight of the king is clearly indicated, and in both cases the g4-g5 advance can in no way be prevented.

In the previous game, Black, making use of a gradualist strategy, just about had to provoke the enemy pawn advance, for this led to the obstruction of squares that might otherwise have been used by White’s pieces (the h4-square for the knight), thereby permitting him to carry out unhindered the evacuation of his king. The situation is quite different here, where there is *no danger at all* that the king’s flight will be impeded by the white pieces, so Black’s ‘deliberate slowness’ (in so far as it was his deliberate intent in the first place) only amounts to a deleterious waste of time.

Correct was the *immediate* 19…♘d7 followed by …f7-f6 and …♔f7; for example, 20.h4 f6 21.♗c1 ♔f7 22.g5 hxg5 23.hxg5, when Black can transfer the king to b8 by way of d6 undisturbed. Later on he can also consider an attack with …b6-b5 and …c5-c4, which is ‘there in the position’.

In brief: Black had the opportunity to fully consolidate his position. After the faulty text move the black king cannot get out of the burning house and dies a miserable death. (Who says death by fire is beautiful?)

20.h4 ♞h7 21.♝c1 f6 22.♜f2 ♜c7 23.♜g2 ♛e7 24.♛h3 ♜c6 25.♝d2 ♜d8 26.♚h1 ♜dd6 27.a4



Up to this point, Black’s …b6-b5 always would have failed to a2-a4, but now White needs the queen’s rook on the kingside; he therefore makes use of this preventive measure on the queenside.

27…♗c8 28.♖ag1 a6 29.♖h2

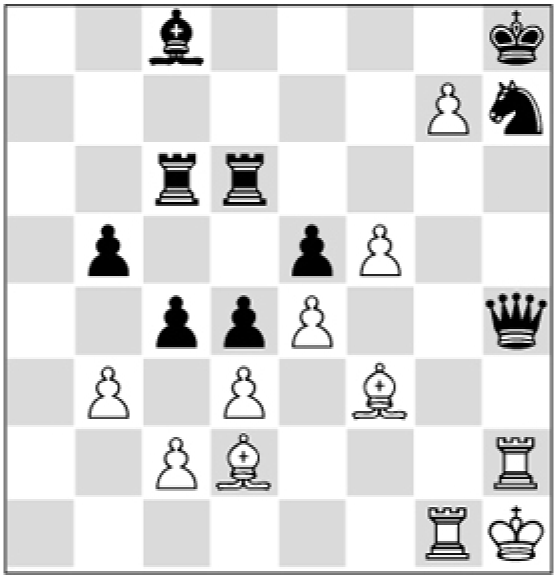
Now g4-g5 can no longer be staved off.

29…♚h8 30.g5 fxg5 31.hxg5 b5 32.axb5 axb5 33.♕h4 c4

There is no longer any defense.

34.gxh6 ♕xh4 35.hxg7+

Black resigned.



There could follow 35…♔g8 36.♖xh4 ♖d8 37.♗a5 ♖e8 38.♗h5 ♖e7 39.♗f7+ ♖xf7 40.♖xh7 ♔xh7 41.g8♕+, etc.

The moral:

Provoke an enemy pawn storm only when the subsequent blocking-up of squares as a result of the advance may be helpful to your plans (the king flight).

In all other cases, run away as quickly as you can, as the ‘deliberate slowness’ in Game 29 would be utterly futile!

4. Restraint in the Case of the Doubled-Pawn Complex (Shortened ‘Double-Complex’)

A) White: pawns at a2, c3, c4, d3, e4; Black: pawns at e5, d6, c7, b7, a7 (Games 31-34).

B) The fixed doubled pawn at c2 and c3 (or c7 and c6). White: pawns at c2, c3, d4, the e-pawn standing on e3 or e5; Black: pawns on c4, d5,

and e6 (Game 35).
C) The doubled pawn at c2 and c3 blockaded by a knight on c4 (Game 36).

Regarding a):
Unless White cooperates, Black will hardly succeed in inducing the pawn complex, curled up like a hedgehog, to unroll by d3-d4; rather, it will remain curled up-it will ‘stand pat’. Then again, such a practice of asceticism can hardly contribute in any significant way to the build-up of White’s position – exactly the opposite is in fact true (cf. Game 31).
Once the complex has come out of its shell it almost never stops simply with d3-d4; rather, in the end, d4-d5 is also played, by which the complex is compromised even more. In my view, this further advance can be ascribed to a certain nervousness (the disagreeable pressure, especially along the e-file), while objective reasons are hardly to be found.
Compare this with the following opening of a game between Tartakower (White) and myself, played at Berlin 1928: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗g5 ♗xc3+ 5.bxc3 ♕e7 6.♕c2 d6 7.e4 e5 8.♗d3 h6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♘e2 (or 10.♘f3, as in Game 33) 10…♘c6 11.d5. There is no objective reason for this move, the paltry threat 11…exd4 12.cxd4 ♘b4 being parried easily by 11.♖b1.
In Game 33 as well – see the note to Black’s 13th move – we shall have occasion to become convinced of the great capacity for resistance possessed by the expanded complex after d3-d4. In contrast, after d4-d5 (without Black having made use of the ultimate measure, namely …c7-c5) the weakness of the pawn complex is readily apparent (see Game 32, note to the 39th move). The possibilities arising out of …c7-c5; d4-d5 are examined in Games 33 and 34.

Regarding b):
The double weakness, that is, the isolated a-pawn and the doubled c-pawn, taken together, provide a none-too-happy picture, for it is precisely the presence of the blockaded doubled pawn that makes the Isolani seem as truly isolated as it is and cut off from the rest of the army (No. 35). If his pawn chain extends to e5 (pawns at c3, d4, and

e5), on the other hand, then White of course has counter-chances. In such cases, a prophylactic defense of the complex has to be considered – see the games played later vs. Kmoch (Niendorf 1927) and Vajda (Keckskemet 1927), Games 50 and 49, respectively.

Regarding c):
Compare the following two openings: 1.e4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.exd5 exd5 5.d4 ♗f5 6.a3 ♕d7 7.♗g2 0-0-0 8.♘ge2 ♘ce7! 9.♘f4 ♘f6 10.h3 h5 11.♘d3 ♘e4 12.♗e3 ♘xc3! 13.bxc3 ♘c6 14.♘b4 ♗e6 15.♕e2 ♘a5 (Leonhardt-Nimzowitsch, Berlin 1928), and 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.♘e2 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗f4 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♕c1 ♗a5!. If now 11.a3 (to prevent 11…♘b4), then 11…♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♘a5, when Black’s double maneuver with the bishop has had the effect of bringing the enemy a-pawn forward (on a2 the pawn would have been less easily attacked).
After these preliminary remarks let us turn to the games.

Game 31

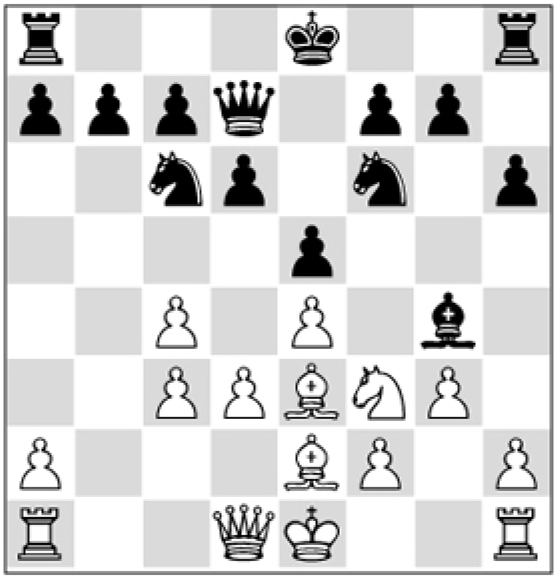
Aron Nimzowitsch
Friedrich Sämisch
Dresden 1926 (9)

In this game Black proves unable to induce the enemy doubled-pawn complex to advance (White prefers to ‘stand pat’), so the clinical picture of the malady does not become clear. But there is compensation for this in the possible observation of secondary symptoms, namely taking note of the considerable ‘helplessness’ of the white pieces. These pieces would in theory be prepared to attack, but their desire for attack is hamstrung by the awareness that the cooperation of the ‘pawn party’ cannot altogether be relied upon. Inasmuch as the incriminated pawn mass is rather unreliable also in the defensive sense (for in the end there *is* the threat of its being rolled up by …c7-c6 and …d6-d5), the hesitant attitude of the pieces (10.♕c2 and 11.♕d2) is amply motivated.
Hence the hidden pawn weaknesses are projected onto a surface where they are made clearly visible to the student and make the study of the game profitable for him.

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4 ♗b4 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♗g4 7.♗e2

Not as inconsequential a move as it may appear, for 6.g3 was primarily intended as a protective move, defending against a possible knight incursion into h4. Also, 7.♗g2 would allow 7…♘d4.

7…h6 8.♗e3 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕d7



10.♕c2

White acknowledges the limited mobility of his central pawn mass, for d3-d4 and even d4-d5 would only lead to paralysis in view of the weakness of the c5-square. So he tries to *adapt* the movements of his pieces to his *modest circumstances in terrain*. Along these lines White also could have considered 10.♘d2 (in order, with f2-f3, to establish a frog position); e.g., 10…♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♘g4 12.f3 ♘xe3 13.♕xe3 0-0 14.0-0, with a nearly even game. 10.♕d2, on the other hand, could be seen as a misuse of the modest space available, for the d2-square has to remain open, and the queen would be better placed on c2, keeping an eye on a4 and holding d3-d4 in reserve. On 10.♕d2 we recommend 10…♘a5; e.g., 11.♕c2 0-0 followed by …♖fe8, …c7-c6, and …d6-d5, when Black should have the advantage. There followed:

10…0-0?

Here, too, we would have preferred 10…♘a5 (11.d4? ♘xc4!).

11.♕d2!

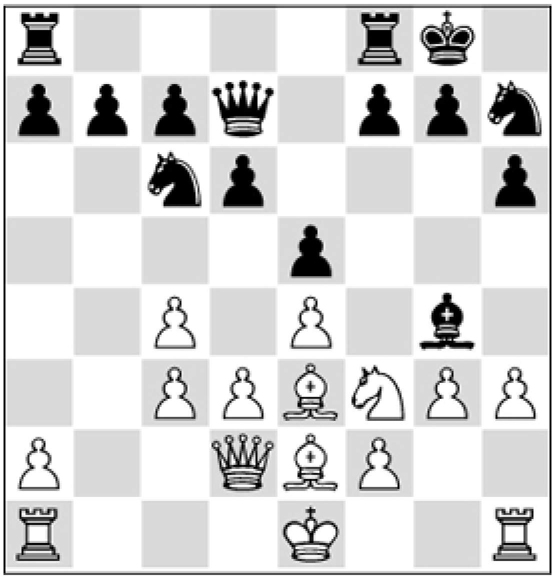
Now this is appropriate, as the black castled position is in danger.

11…♞h7?

To follow up with …f7-f5; but this cannot be realized, so the only end result is the decentralized knight on h7.

12.h3!

Besides this, 12.♘h4 also would have been sufficient.



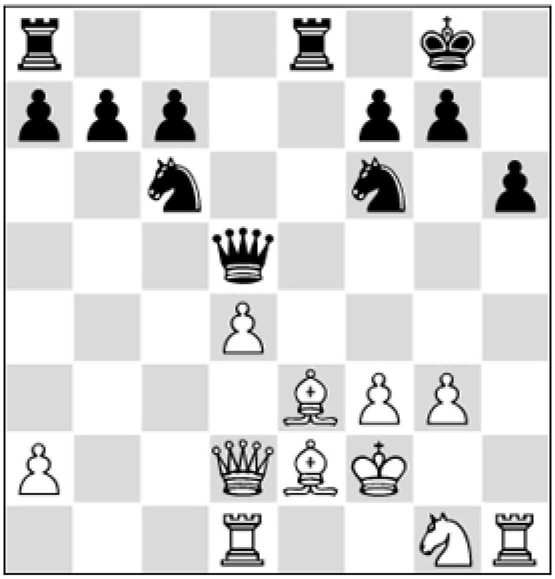
12…♝xh3

Loses a piece. Black had reckoned only on 13.♗xh6, which as it happens would also have been strong: 13.♗xh6 ♗g2 14.♖h2 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 gxh6 16.♕xh6 f6 17.♗g4!, etc.

13.♞g1! ♝g4 14.f3 ♝e6 15.d4

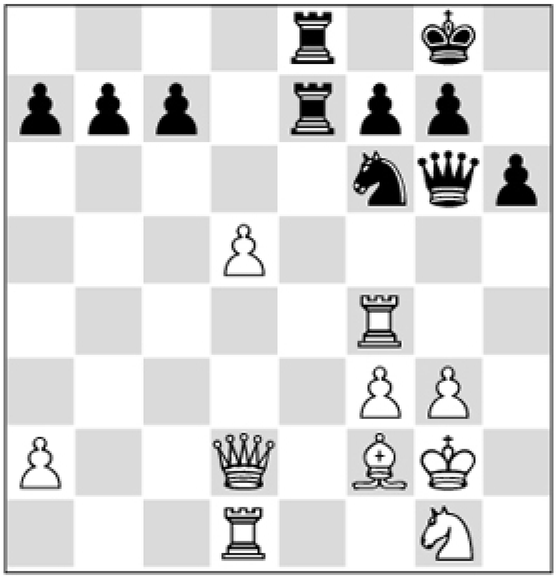
And Black cannot save the piece.

15…exd4 16.cxd4 d5 17.cxd5 ♝xd5 18.exd5 ♛xd5 19.♜d1 ♜fe8 20.♚f2 ♞f6



A repentant return by the decentralized knight.

21.♖h4 ♘e7 22.♗d3 ♘f5 23.♗xf5 ♕xf5 24.♔g2 ♖e7 25.♗f2 ♖ae8 26.♖f4 ♕g6 27.d5



Now that the consolidation has been carried out – moves 24 and 25 – White looks to contend the d5-square, after which the second player's last hope vanishes.

27…♖e5

If 27…♖d7, then 28.♕a5, etc.

28.♖d4 ♖d8 29.♕a5 ♘h5 30.♕xc7 ♖de8 31.d6

Black resigned.

Game 32

Aron Nimzowitsch
Edgar Colle
London 1927 (11)

The doubled-pawn complex of the previous game, extended – and weakened – by d3-d4, comprises the thematic struggle of the present game. Taken as a whole, the advance d3-d4 may have had a stimulating effect on White’s game, but for the complex itself it meant the first step downhill. And d4-d5 was the second and last step. Let me be quite clear on this point: the successes and failures of the complex need *not* always coincide with those of the game as a whole, but as a rule they tend to. Let us note, too, how White, despite it all, was forced in the end to play d4-d5. Here is the game:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗b4+ 6.♘c3

To raise the problem of the doubled-pawn complex for discussion.

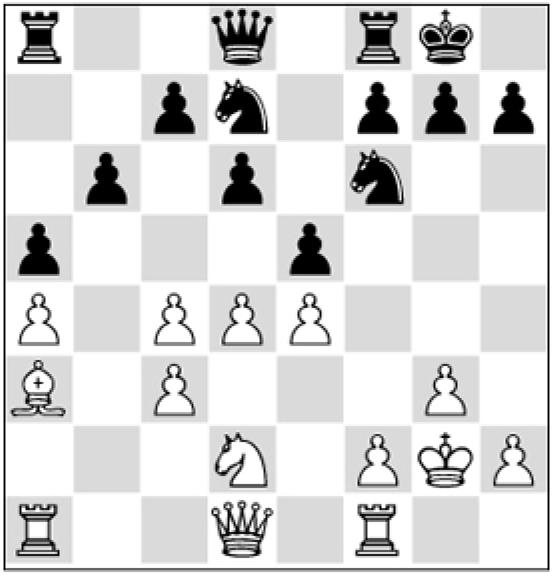
6…0-0 7.0-0 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 d6 9.a4!

To provoke …a7-a5 and thereby block the potential maneuver …♘b8-c6-a5.

9…a5

Or 9…♘c6 10.♘d2 ♘a5 11.♗xb7 ♘xb7 12.♘b3, when the complex is reasonably healthy.

10.♗a3 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♗xg2 12.♔xg2 e5 13.e4



Now we can see the expanded (by the advance d3-d4) complex of Game 31 in life size.

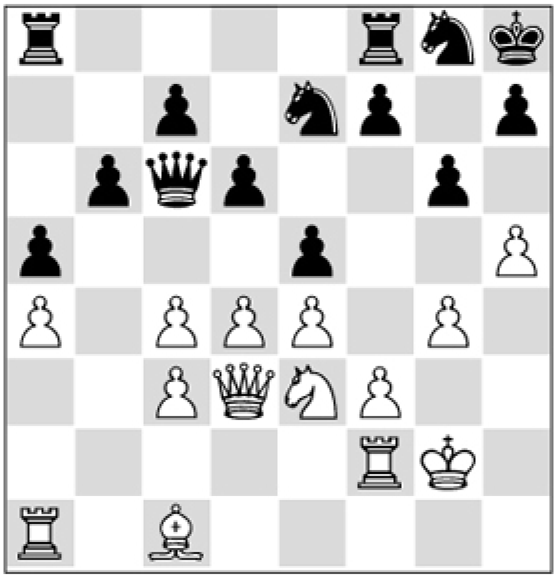
13…♖e8

Threatening 14…exd4 and 15…♘xe4. Normally this threat is sufficient to force d4-d5, but here the e-pawn is easy to protect.

14.f3 ♘f8

The rook at e8 now functions as a ‘preventive piece’, making f3-f4 more difficult.

15.♖f2 ♕d7 16.♘f1 ♘g6 17.♗c1 ♔h8 18.♘e3 ♘g8 19.h4 ♕c6 20.h5 ♘6e7 21.♕d3 ♖f8 22.g4 g6!



23.♝d2! gxh5 24.♞f5

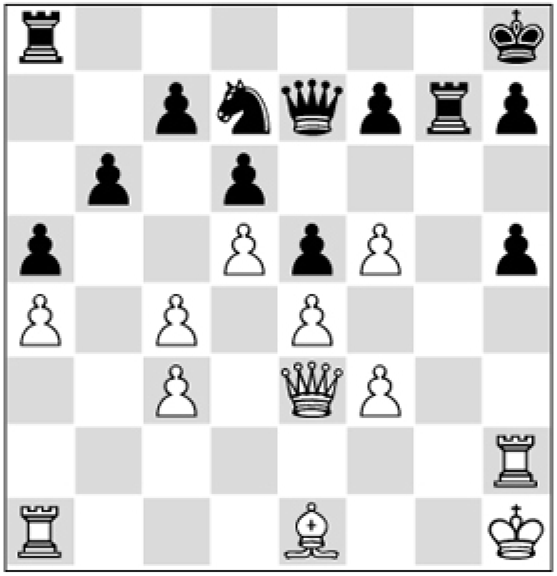
The idea of preventing the threatened advance …f7-f5 itself at the price of a pawn is a sound one, but the question here is whether this might not have been emphasized more pointedly by 24.♖h1; e.g., 24…♕xa4 25.♖xh5 f6 26.♔g3 followed by tripling on the h-file. But White, who was on the verge of winning first prize in the tournament, preferred not to proceed in too sharp a manner.

24…♞xf5 25.gxf5 ♞f6 26.d5

After all! Still, with regard to ‘staying put’, the complex has rendered good service.

26…♛d7 27.♛e3 ♜g8+ 28.♚h1 ♛e7 29.♜h2 ♜g7 30.♝e1 ♞d7

In consideration of the threatened 31.♗h4.



31.♜xh5

31.♗h4 f6 32.♕h6 ♕f7, followed by shuttling the queen’s rook back and forth (♖d1-a1-d1, etc.), is simpler.

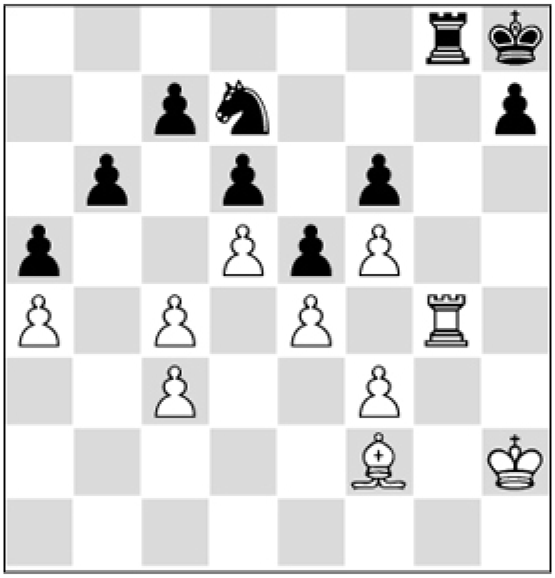
31…♜ag8 32.♝f2 f6 33.♜h2!

The deployment that consolidates White’s game.

33…♜g5 34.♝h4 ♜h5 35.♜g1 ♛f8 36.♜g4 ♛h6 37.♛xh6 ♜xh6 38.♝f2

38.♖xg8+ and 39.♗f2 would have led to an obvious draw.

38…♜xh2+ 39.♚xh2



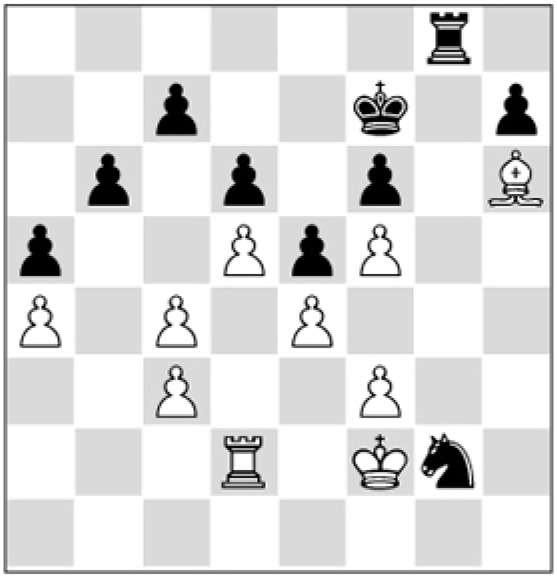
39…♜b8!

It is characteristic of the great weakness of the crippled doubled-pawn complex that Black, despite the fact that his pawns stand in a certain sense on an insecure foundation (for they are placed on squares of the same color as the enemy bishop), can nevertheless make attempts to win. And not only with the text move but also with 39…♖c8; e.g., 40.♖g1! c6 (this is the challenge indicated in cases of the crippled pawn complex when it has been drawn forward: first, the advance d3-d4-d5 is provoked, then comes the reckoning by …c7-c6; it is true that in this instance this method cannot be carried out undisturbed, since White, for his part, through a direct kingside attack, had induced weaknesses in the enemy camp) 41.♖b1! cxd5 42.cxd5 ♖xc3 43.♗xb6 ♖xf3 44.♗xa5 ♘c5. The position is then exceedingly double-edged, though it seems to me that the second player has rather the better game.

40.♜g1 ♞c5 41.♜a1 ♚g7 42.♝e3 ♚f7 43.♜a2 ♞d3

White’s last two preventive moves were directed against precisely this; Black should be content with a draw.

44.♜d2 ♞e1 45.♚g3 ♜g8+ 46.♚f2 ♞g2 47.♝h6!

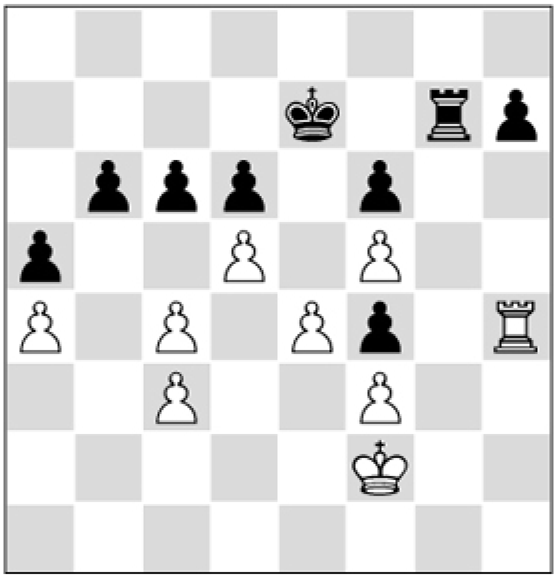


This counter can in some variations lead to the eventual entrapment of the knight, viz: 47…♘h4 48.♔e3 ♖g3 49.♖h2! ♘xf3 50.♔f2 ♘xh2 51.♔xg3 ♘f1+ 52.♔g2, when the horse has been corralled.

47…♘f4?

This costs a pawn and, after a tenacious ending, the game as well. With 47… ♘h4 48.♔e3 ♘g2+ Colle could easily have drawn a game so well played by him. The concluding phase is a most instructive illustration of the 'absolute seventh rank'.

48.♗xf4 exf4 49.♖d1 ♚e7 50.♖h1 ♜g7 51.♖h4 c6

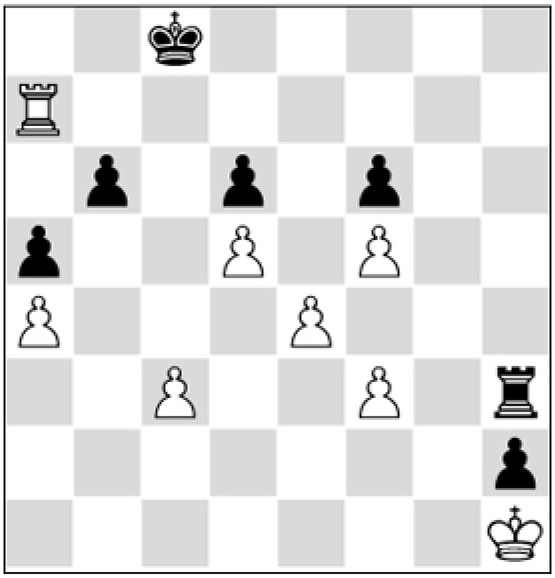


This challenge comes late; still, an answer to it is not easy to come by.

52.♖xf4 h5 53.♖h4 ♜h7 54.♖h1 ♚d7 55.♖g1 cxd5 56.cxd5 h4 57.♖g8 h3 58.♖a8 ♜h6 59.♖a7+ ♚c8

The point has been reached: the rook is in possession of the 'absolute seventh rank', while the king will see to the blockading of the pawn.

60.♔g1 h2+ 61.♔h1 ♜h3



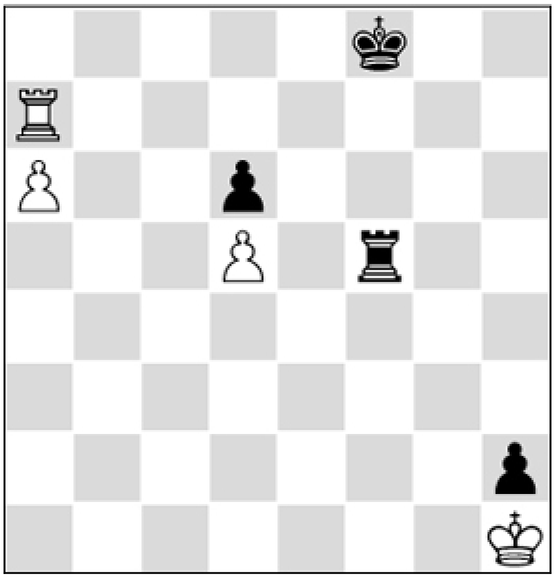
Now it’s a matter of who is faster.

62.♖f7 ♖xf3 63.♖xf6 ♔d7 64.♖f7+ ♔e8 65.♖b7 ♖xc3 66.♖xb6 ♔e7 67.♖b7+!

Always the same motif – the seventh rank!

67…♔f8 68.♖a7 ♖c4 69.♖xa5 ♖xe4 70.♖a7 ♖f4 71.a5 ♖xf5 72.a6

The triumph of the ‘absolute seventh rank’ means possession of the seventh rank and the confinement of the enemy king on the eighth rank – cf. Game 12.



72…♖f1+

For if 72…♖xd5, White decides matters with 73.♖b7 ♖a5 74.a7, when 75.♖b8 comes with check!

73.♚xh2 ♜a1 74.♜a8+ ♚g7 75.♚g3 ♜a4 76.♚f3 ♚f6 77.a7 ♚g7 78.♚e3

Black resigned.

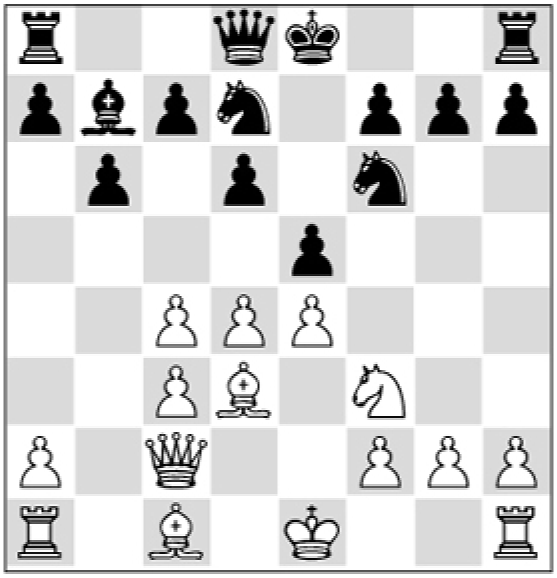
Game 33

Dawid Janowsky
Aron Nimzowitsch
St Petersburg 1914 (6)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♝b4 4.e3 b6 5.♝d3 ♝b7 6.♘f3 ♝xc3+ 7.bxc3 d6

Possible here was 7…c5! followed by …♘c6.

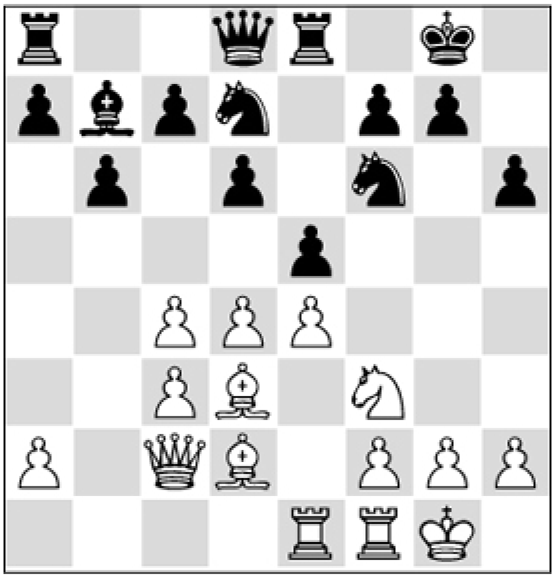
8.♕c2 ♘bd7 9.e4 e5



Black at this point seemed to have reached a well-consolidated position. But meanwhile, the bishop at b7 plays a rather dubious role, for on the one hand its power is insufficient to force d4-d5, and on the other its absence from the c8-g4 diagonal soon proves unpleasant.

The transition to an open game simply occurred too suddenly.

10.0-0 0-0 11.♝g5 h6 12.♝d2 ♜e8 13.♜ae1



13…♘h7

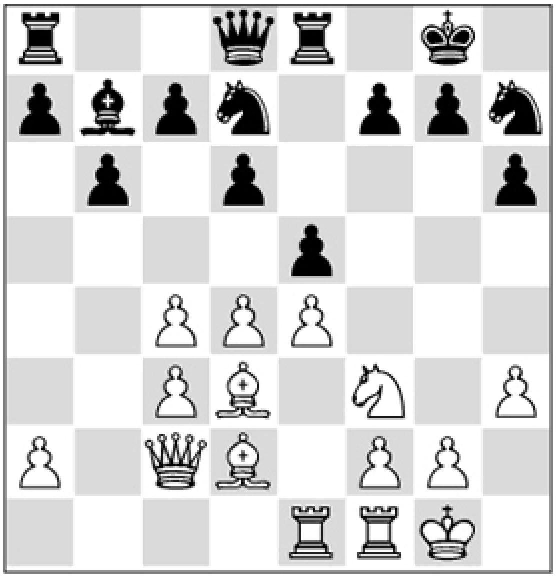
With the somewhat strange-looking move 13…♖e6 (to be followed by …♕e8) Black could have played to stop White’s ‘standing pat’ (i.e., forcing d4-d5). The sequel might have been: (13…♖e6) 14.♘h4! (to exploit the weakness of f5; cf. the note to the 9th move) 14…g6! 15.f4 (not 15.♗xh6 because of 15…♘g4) 15…exf4 16.♗xf4, and now Black would have the choice between 15…g5?, 16…♘h5, and 16…♕e8. Black’s intended strategical goal would be seen most clearly with 16…♕e8, namely after 17.d5 ♖e7 18.♗xh6 ♘g4 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗c1 ♘ge5, when White enjoys his possession of an extra pawn, certainly, but apart from that is not resting on a bed of roses. Among other things his doubled-pawn complex is crippled and Black is in control of points in the center.

Even more illuminating would be the variation 16…♘h5; e.g., 17.♕f2? ♖f6 18.g3 g5 19.e5 ♘xf4 20.gxf4 ♖xf4 and wins. Or (16…♘h5) 17.♗g3 ♘xg3 18.hxg3 ♕g5 followed by …♖ae8. But after 13…♖e6 the reply probably would have been 14.♖e2!; e.g., 14…♕e8 15.♖fe1, when White continues his policy of standing still with the utmost tenacity. But Black would have registered a success of his own: the possibility f2-f4, thanks to the departure of the rook from the f-file, has retreated far into the distance.

Apart from 13…♖e6, 13…♘f8 could be considered; e.g., 14.h3 ♘g6 15.♘h2 ♖e7 16.f4? exf4 17.♗xf4 ♕e8, when d4-d5 is forced. Finally, an immediate 13…c5 was playable, but then White could block up the whole position with 14.d5.

14.h3

If 14.♔h1 (recommended in the book of the tournament), the reply 14…♘df6 (*inter alia*) could be played; e.g., 15.♘g1 ♘g5, when the f2-f4 advance is unfeasible.



14…♘hf8

Here, too, 14…♘df6 could have been played.

15.♘h2 ♘e6 16.♗e3 c5 17.d5 ♘f4

While he lost his queenside chances as a result of …c7-c5, Black has recovered some opportunities on the king's wing.

18.♗e2 ♘f8 19.♗g4 ♗c8

At last the bishop finds itself on the right diagonal.

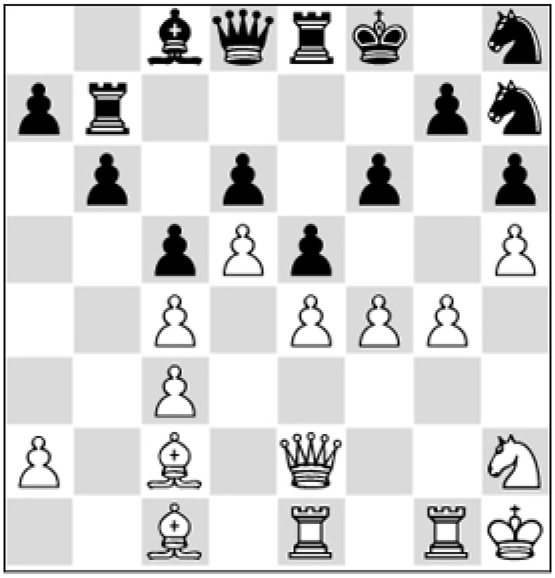
20.♕d2 ♗a6

20…♘8g6 may have been simpler, but Black does not have faith in his kingside attack, and the fact that he could not force d4-d5 without having to make concessions to his opponent – 16…c7-c5 was one – has had a depressing effect. Therefore, in what follows he is content to assume a frog position – and in so doing nearly wins the game.

21.g3 ♘4g6 22.♗e2 ♘h7 23.h4 ♘f6 24.♗d3 ♖b8!

The rook is brought to e7 as a preventive measure.

25.♕e2 ♖b7 26.♗c1 ♖be7 27.♔h1 ♗c8 28.♖g1 ♔f8 29.h5 ♘h8 30.g4 ♘h7 31.♗c2 ♖b7 32.f4 f6



At last Janowsky has carried out the advance long planned, but to achieve this he has had to give up several valuable squares, e.g., g5. This will exact its revenge later on.

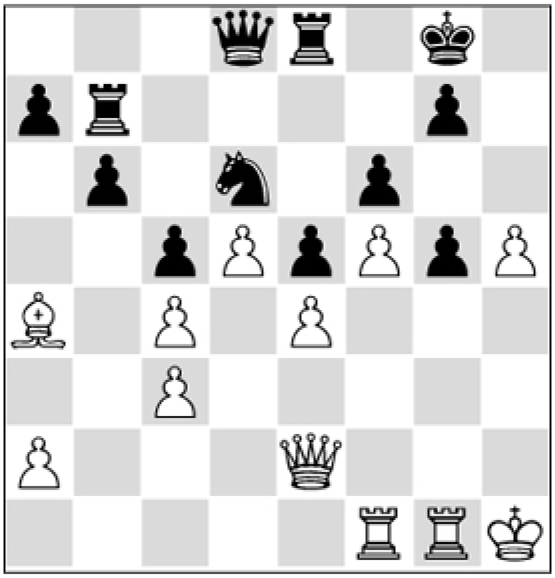
33.fxe5

33.g5 leads to nothing; e.g., 33…fxg5 34.fxg5 hxg5 35.♖g3 ♘f7 36.♘f3? g4, etc.

33…dxe5 34.♘f3 ♘f7 35.♖ef1 ♔g8 36.♘h4 ♘d6 37.♘f5 ♗xf5 38.gxf5 ♘g5

Cf. the note to the 32nd move.

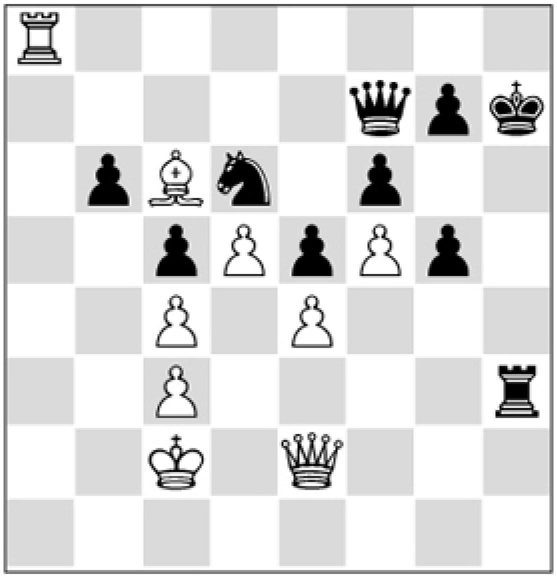
39.♗xg5 hxg5 40.♗a4



He does not trouble himself about his own vulnerable h-pawn but instead seeks to roll up his opponent’s queenside (with ♗c6 followed by a2-a4-a5, etc.). Later we shall have occasion to see in games corresponding to this one that the rolling-up action assumes the character of a punitive expedition (the move 16…c5? is avenged). The fact that Janowsky, despite the weaknesses in his position, undertakes the bold attempt to ruthlessly expose the flaws in his opponent’s game, is deserving of all praise. (Janowsky had a wonderfully fine feel for chess.)

The book of the tournament takes a different view, excoriating Janowsky’s sharp combination and holding the ensuing loss of a pawn resulting from it to be decisive. But even if this were so – which we doubt – the merit of this line of play remains in a certain sense unaffected. For through Janowsky’s maneuver, whether correct or not, the *secret of the position is unveiled!*

40…♜f8 41.♝c6 ♜b8 42.a4 ♚f7 43.♚g2 ♜h8 44.♜h1 ♜h6 45.♜a1 ♛c7 46.♚f2 ♜bh8 47.♚e3 ♚g8 48.♚d3 ♛f7 49.a5 ♜xh5 50.♜xh5 ♜xh5 51.axb6 ♜h3+ 52.♚c2 axb6 53.♜a8+ ♚h7 54.♜d8 ♛a7 55.♜a8 ♛f7



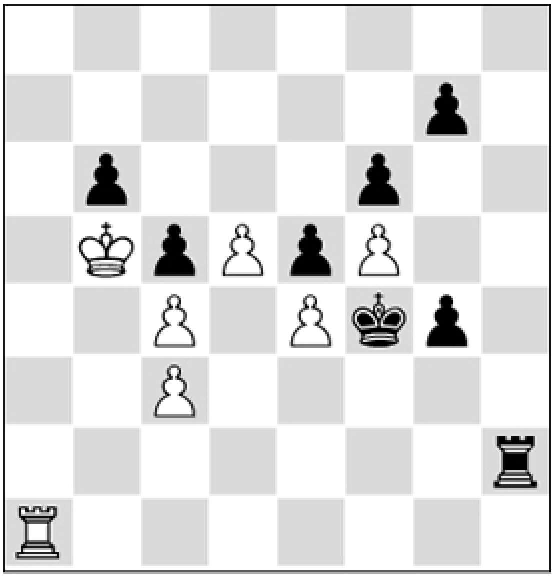
56.♔b3

Here White stumbles: how could Black have won after 56.♖d8? Let us examine: 56.♖d8 ♕a7 57.♖a8 ♕c7 58.♔b3 ♖h4 59.♕a2 ♖xe4 60.♖f8 ♘xf5 61.♕a8 ♘d6 62.♖d8, etc. Or 60…g6 61.♕a8 gxf5 62.♖h8+ ♔g6 63.♗e8+ ♔g7 64.♗h5 and mate in a few moves.

56…♕h5 57.♕xh5+ ♖xh5 58.♗e8 ♘xe8?

Tired out by the protracted defense Black misses the immediately decisive continuation 58…♖h6!. If now 59.♖d8, then simply 59…g4, etc.; but if 59.♗g6+, Black wins with 59…♖xg6 60.fxg6+ ♔xg6 61.♔c2! ♘xe4 62.♔d3 ♔f5! (it was this stroke that Black overlooked in his calculations). After the text it may be that a win for Black can no longer be demonstrated.

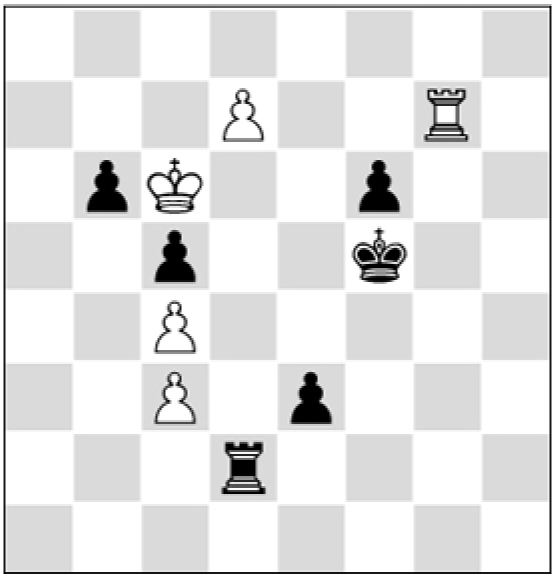
59.♖xe8 ♖h2 60.♖a8 g4 61.♖a1 ♔h6 62.♔a4 ♔g5 63.♔b5 ♔f4



64.♖g1

The best move, as Black threatened 64…♔xe4 followed by …♔f3 and the rapid advance of the passed pawns.

64…♚xe4 65.♖xg4+ ♚xf5 66.♖xg7 ♜b2+ 67.♚c6 e4 68.d6 ♜d2 69.d7 e3



70.♚xb6

70.♔c7 would lose for White.

70…e2 71.♖e7 ♜xd7 72.♖xe2 ♜d3 73.♖c2 ♜d8 74.♖c1 ♜b8+ 75.♚c7 ♜e8 76.♚d6 ♜d8+ 77.♚xc5 ♜c8+ 78.♚d6 ♜xc4 79.♚d5 ♜c8 80.c4 ♜d8+

81.♔c6 ♔g4 82.♖g1+ ♔h3 83.c5 f5 84.♔c7 ♖f8 85.c6 f4

Agreed drawn. A difficult game.

Game 34

Paul Johner

Aron Nimzowitsch

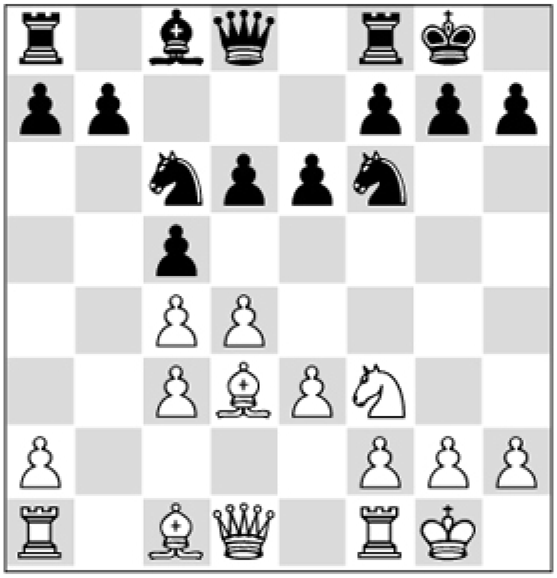
Dresden 1926 (2)

I have already presented this game in *My System*. If I repeat it here, even with different notes, I do so because its connection with our Game 33 means we cannot do without it.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0

Against Janowsky (see the previous game) I played 4…b6 here.

5.♗d3 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 d6



9.♘d2

A fine move. If now 9…e5, then 10.d5 ♘e7 (not to a5 because of ♘b3) 11.e4, with a pawn configuration that we came to know from the previous game (move 22). The only difference that *might* engage our attention here is that Black's b-pawn is still on b7 (and not already on b6), so the rolling-up attack with a2-a4-a5 is not threatened. But will the b7-pawn be able to maintain itself on b7 in light of the open b-file?

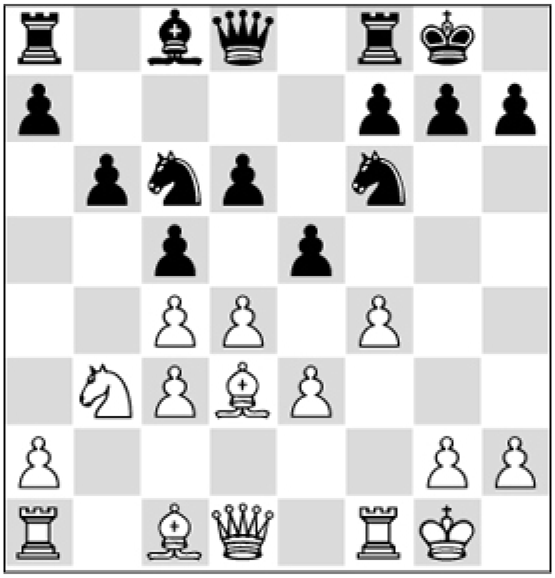
9…b6

To open the b7-square for the … knight. That is to say, Black is planning 10… e5 11.d5 ♘a5, and if 12.♘b3, then 12…♘b7.

10.♘b3

Here, 10.f4 was indicated. After 10…e5 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.d5 ♘a5 13.♘b3 ♘b7 14.e4 ♘e8 followed by …♘ed6, the pawn configuration seen in Game 33 (after the 36th move) would be reached, a formation that, generally speaking, has a rather mummifying effect on the game.

10…e5! 11.f4



11…e4!

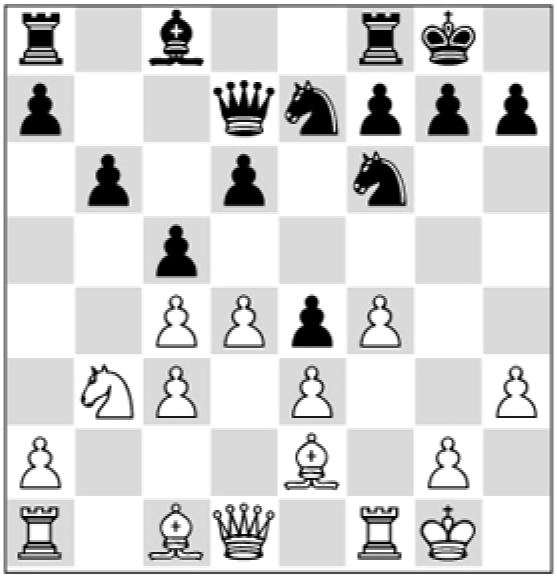
This move would also have followed 11.d5; e.g., 11…e4 12.♗e2 ♘e5, with centralization, or 11…e4 12.dxc6 exd3 with advantage to Black.

The point of this seemingly bloodless struggle (moves 9 through 11) lies precisely in the fact that in reality it was full of tension and very bloody. White played f2-f4 one tempo too late, making it possible for the forward-pressing e-pawn to barely escape the righteous anger of the f-pawn. Had Black played 11…♕e7 instead of 11…e4! in order, after 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.d5 to choose the retreating move 13…♘d8 (13…e4! would be better, however), then 14.e4 ♘e8 would follow, with a general mummifying of the position. After the text move 11…e4 Black has an additional and very difficult problem to solve, namely the restraint of White’s king’s wing (the f-, g-, and h-pawns).

12.♝e2 ♛d7!!

Initiating a most difficult and complex restraining maneuver. Another restraining possibility here lay in 12…♘e8, although after 13.g4 f5 14.d5 ♘e7 15.g5 this would again lead to a petrification of the position – the c5 and f5-squares would be unavailable to the knights. To undertake a restraining action while avoiding a deadening of the position makes the problem before us difficult to solve!

13.h3 ♞e7



14.♛e1

We might ask whether White’s attack will even be sufficient to effect a ‘mummification’. Let us examine this: 14.♗d2 ♘f5 (from this square Black can develop an initiative; for instance, threatening with …♘g3 to trade off the bishop supporting the pawn at c4) 15.♕e1 g6 16.g4 ♘g7 17.♕h4 ♘fe8 and now 18.a4 (*inter alia* to prevent …♕a4 as well). If 18…f5, then 19.g5 and 20.d5, reaching a position that is very difficult to assess; e.g., 19.g5 ♘c7 20.d5 ♗a6! (a preventive move directed against the threatened a4-a5, on which now the reply …b6-b5 could always follow) 21.♔f2 ♕f7! 22.♖fd1 (22.♕h6 falters on the combination 22…♘xd5 23.cxd5 ♗xe2 24.♔xe2 ♕xd5 25.♘c1 ♘h5!, when the white queen is cut off for the duration; Black then wins with a general pawn advance) 22…♔h8 and 23…♘h5, Black seeking by means of …♖g8, …♔g7-f8-e7-d7 to prepare the breakthrough …

h7-h6. If we consider that Black, before the 20…♗a6 chosen, could have first played …a7-a5 (to amputate the counter-chance a4-a5), it becomes clear that the deadlock striven for by White would face great practical difficulties in its realization.

14…h5

The beginning of the strangulation process.

15.♝d2

Or 15.♕h4 ♘f5 16.♕g5 ♘h7 17.♕xh5 ♘g3.

15…♛f5!

To migrate to h7 – this was the original point of the restraining maneuver.

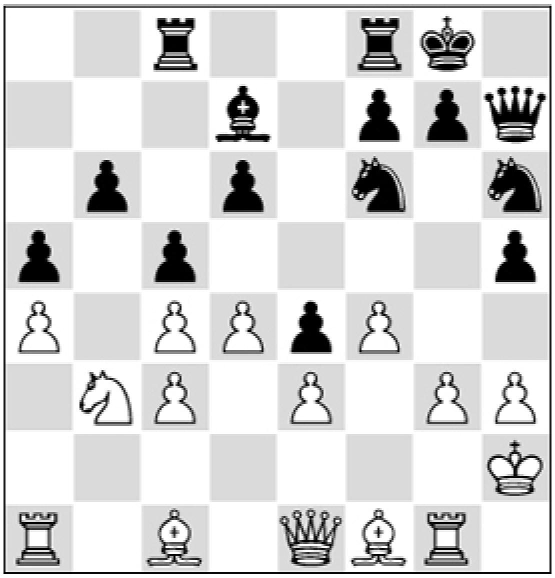
16.♚h2 ♛h7! 17.a4 ♞f5

Threatening 18…♘g4+ 19.hxg4 hxg4+ 20.♔g1 g3, etc.

18.g3 a5

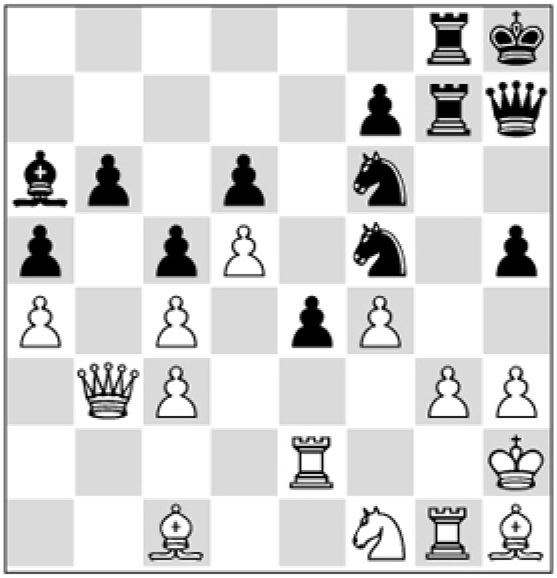
The b6-pawn is easy to protect.

19.♜g1 ♞h6 20.♝f1 ♝d7 21.♝c1 ♜ac8



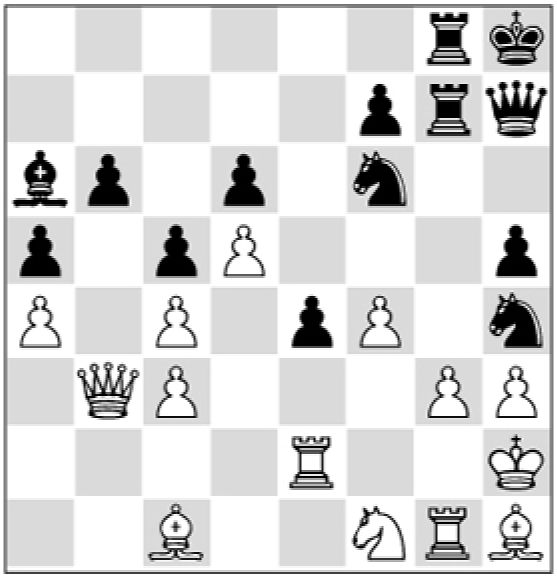
Now the situation is quite different from what it was at move 14. Black need no longer fear the closure of the position after d4-d5, as he has sufficient play on the kingside.

22.d5 ♚h8 23.♞d2 ♜g8 24.♝g2 g5 25.♞f1 ♜g7 26.♜a2 ♞f5 27.♝h1 ♜cg8 28.♛d1 gxf4! 29.exf4 ♝c8 30.♛b3 ♝a6 31.♜e2



White seizes his chance: the e-pawn is in need of protection. If he had resorted to a purely defensive game with, say, 31.♗d2, he would have been subject to a fine combination, namely with 31…♖g6! 32.♗e1 ♘g4+ 33.hxg4 hxg4+ 34.♔g2 ♗xc4! 35.♕xc4, when there now follows the quiet move 35…e3!! – the mate on h3 can be parried only by 36.♘xe3, costing White his queen.

31…♞h4



32.♜e3

Here I naturally expected 32.♘d2, for Black’s need to protect the important e4-pawn constitutes White’s sole counter-chance, as already pointed out. After that move there would have followed a delightful sacrifice of the queen, that is, with 32…♗c8 33.♘xe4 ♕f5! 34.♘f2 ♕xh3+ 35.♘xh3 ♘g4#. The main point in this variation, incidentally, is that the moves …♗c8 and …♕f5 may not be inverted; e.g., 32.♘d2 ♕f5? (instead of 32…♗c8!) 33.♕d1! ♗c8 34.♕f1 and everything is protected, while if 32…♗c8! 33.♕d1, the move 33…♗xh3! would sweep away the cornerstone of White’s edifice (34.♔xh3 ♕f5+, etc.).

32…♝c8 33.♛c2 ♝xh3! 34.♝xe4

34.♔xh3 ♕f5+ 35.♔h2 would have led to mate in three moves.

34…♝f5

Best, as now …h5-h4 can no longer be held up. The fall of the h3-pawn has deprived the defense of all hope.

35.♝xf5 ♞xf5 36.♜e2 h4 37.♜gg2 hxg3++ 38.♚g1 ♛h3 39.♞e3 ♞h4 40.♚f1 ♜e8!

A precise concluding move, for Black now threatens 41…♘xg2 42.♖xg2 ♕h1+ 43.♔e2 ♕xg2+, against which White is defenseless. On 41.♔e1 there would even be checkmate after 41… ♘f3+ 42.♔f1 (or 42.♔d1) 42…♕h1.

One of the most beautiful blockade games I have ever played.

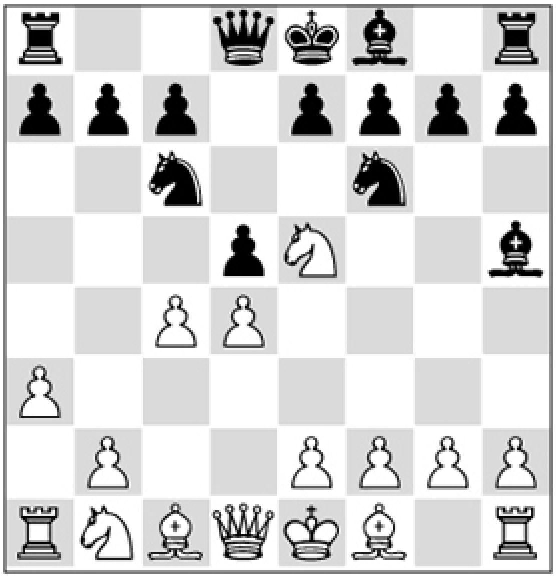
Game 35

Aron Nimzowitsch
Milan Vidmar
Karlsbad 1907 (4)

1.♞f3 d5 2.d3 ♞c6 3.d4 ♞f6 4.a3

To force Black to declare his intentions. If 4…e6, the bishop remains shut out of the game; if he plays 4…♗f5, there follows 5.e3, then c2-c4 and perhaps ♕b3; and if 4…♗g4, then 5.♘e5 should be played.

4…♝g4 5.♞e5 ♝h5 6.c4



The following surprising combination underlies this move: 6…dxc4 7.♕a4 ♕xd4 8.♘xc6 ♕d7 9.g4! ♘xg4 10.♗g2 ♘e5 11.♕b5, holding on to the piece. It is strange that no one has thought of 9…♗g6 (instead of 9…♘xg4): after 10.♘c3 ♕xc6 11.♕xc6+ bxc6 12.♗g2 ♔d7 13.g5 ♘e8 the defending side would have the advantage. But White could have played more simply, and better, namely with (6…dxc4) 7.♘xc6! bxc6 8.♕a4 ♕d7 9.e3, with a good game. Hence, playing for *zugzwang* on the 4th move seems to be correct after all, a rare case in so early a stage of the game!

6…e6? 7.♛a4 ♝d6

Playing right into this opponent’s hands, since now the confining move c4-c5 is possible with gain of time. On 7…♗e7, however, 8.♘c3 would follow, when Black, after the further moves 8…0-0 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.♕xc6, could not exploit his advantage in time – hence the pawn minus would have assumed a decisive significance.

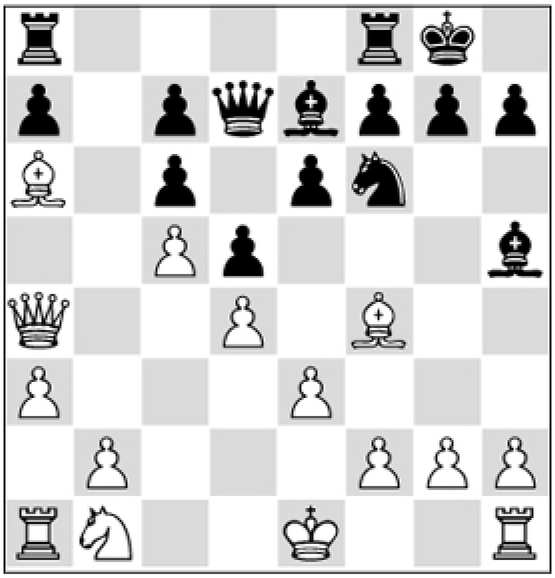
8.♞xc6 ♛d7 9.c5 ♝e7 10.♝f4

To prevent 10…♕xc6; the blockader must as a rule try to avoid exchanges.

10…bxc6 11.e3 0-0

11…a5 was forbidden in view of 12.b4 and bxa5, etc.; now, however, the black a-pawn is rendered immobile.

12.♝a6



This blockade is very disagreeable for Black, as it frustrates his plan to advance and trade off his a-pawn, an outcome that would be most convenient for him. The plan was potentially to get rid of the a-pawn by advancing it. The fact that the obstructing bishop also secures the b7-square does not come as a surprise to us, for we know that ‘blockade squares almost without exception tend to be strong squares *in every respect*’.

12…♖fb8 13.b4 ♘e8

Black plans a breakthrough in the center with …f7-f6 and eventually …e6-e5. This is his only resource.

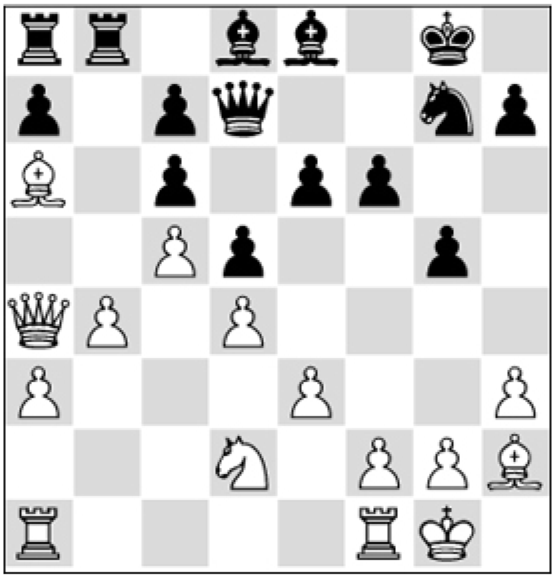
14.0-0

The win of the exchange, attainable by ♘b1-d2-b3-a5, was always at White’s disposal, but he is looking for more.

14…f6 15.♘d2 g5 16.♗g3 ♘g7 17.h3

For the purpose of preserving his bishop.

17…♗e8 18.♗h2 ♗d8



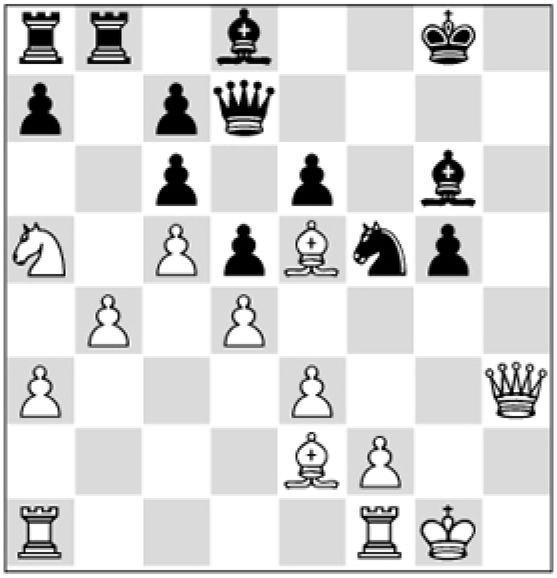
19.g4!

To restrain the knight. The strategic justification for it – since the restraint of the knight is nothing more than a tactical point – is made clear by the following consideration: to combat this bothersome g-pawn Black will have to run his own pawn against it (…h7-h5). Then, inevitably, files will open up that, as matters stand, will be useful to the white rooks (and not to the black) – i.e., a game played from wing to wing. In consideration of his precarious situation on the queenside, Black understandably feels compelled to initiate a counter-action on the other side, which, however, for a certain reason, appears hopeless from the first. This reason we can spot in the unfavorable conditions for communication between the two sides of Black’s position – there is no direct and swift interchange between the two wings.

19…h5 20.♕d1 ♗g6 21.♘b3 hxg4 22.hxg4 f5 23.♗e5 fxg4 24.♕xg4 ♘f5 25.♘a5 ♕h7 26.♗e2!

We observe that White did not withdraw the bishop sooner. First, the replacement troops had to arrive (the knight at a5), as it was essential not to lose track for even a moment of Black’s freeing possibility …a7-a5 – cf. the note to the 12th move.

26…♕d7 27.♕h3

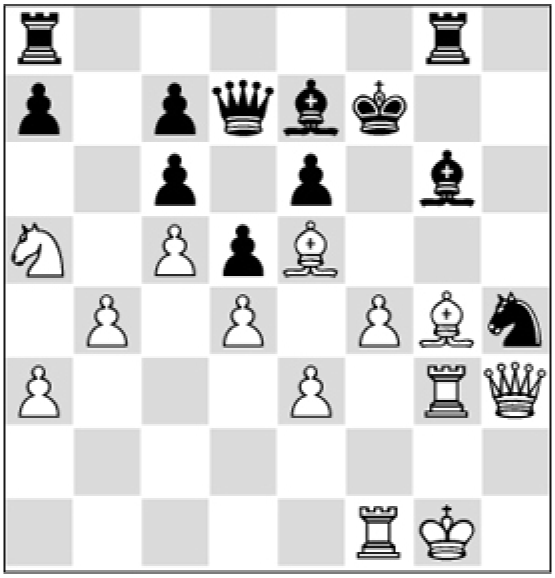


Today I would prefer 27.f4, since I am reluctant to grant a blockaded pawn (in this case, the g-pawn) freedom. On 27.f4 there might follow: 27…♔f7 (27…♘xe3? 28.♕h3!) 28.fxg5 ♗e7 29.e4 dxe4 30.♗c4 ♔e8 (31.♖xf5 was threatened) 31.♖ad1!, winning easily, as Black cannot move a muscle; e.g., 31…♘e3 32.♕h3 ♘xf1 33.♗xe6 ♕d8 34.♘xc6.

27…♚f7 28.f4 g4!

Vidmar prevents the opening of the f-file, which would not have been possible for him after 27.f4. His game is of course lost in any case.

29.♝xg4 ♝e7 30.♜a2 ♜g8 31.♜g2 ♞h4 32.♜g3



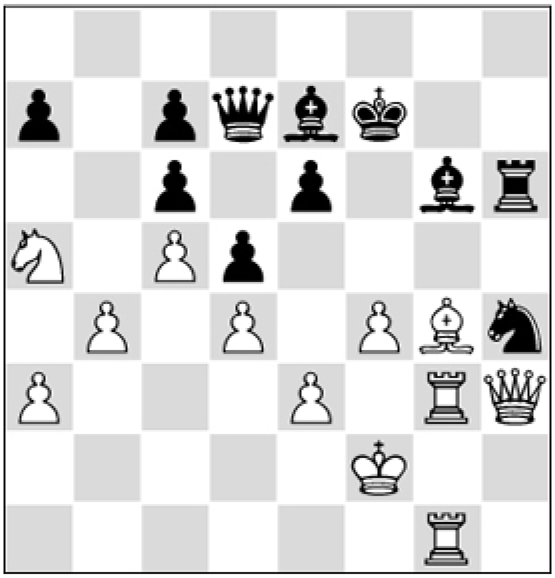
32…♜af8

Probably best. 32…♘f5 was insufficient: 33.♗xf5 ♗xf5 34.♕h5+ ♗g6 35.♕h6, when White will soon force the win with ♔f2 and ♖fg1.

33.♚f2 ♜h8

Desperation. But further waiting would bring certain death; e.g.; 33…♖a8 34.♖fg1 ♖af8 35.♗d1, etc.

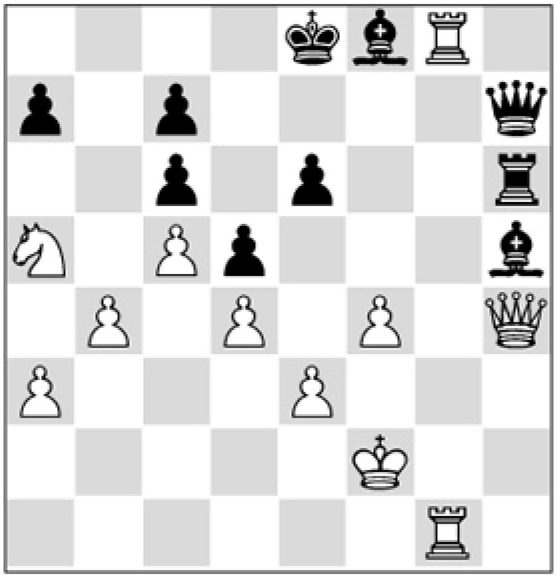
34.♝xh8 ♜xh8 35.♜fg1 ♜h6



36.♝h5

About this Marco says: ‘A brilliant and decisive combination.’ But four moves later I make a gross blunder and the win fails to materialize.

36…♝xh5 37.♜g7+ ♚e8 38.♜g8+ ♝f8 39.♛xh4 ♛h7



40.♖xf8+??

A hallucination with grave consequences. 40.♖1g7 ♕xg7 (if 40…♕c2+, then 41.♔g3) 41.♖xg7 ♗xg7 42.♕g5 ♗f8 43.♘xc6 would have won quickly.

40…♚xf8 41.f5

In playing 40.♖xf8+ White had intended to play 41.♕d8+ here and completely overlooked the reply 41…♗e8.

41…exf5?

Correct was 41…♕xf5+.

42.♜h1

Now White once more has a winning position.

42…f4 43.♛d8+ ♝e8 44.♛f6+ ♜xf6 45.♜xh7 ♝f7

Drawn. Instead of the drawing combination played, 43.♕xf4+ ♔e8 44.e4! would have won; but I was still suffering from the after-effects of my horrible mistake. Despite the appalling blunder on the 40th move the game is, however, very instructive. Vidmar, by the way, escaped from a loss in a similar way on three other occasions against me.

Game 36

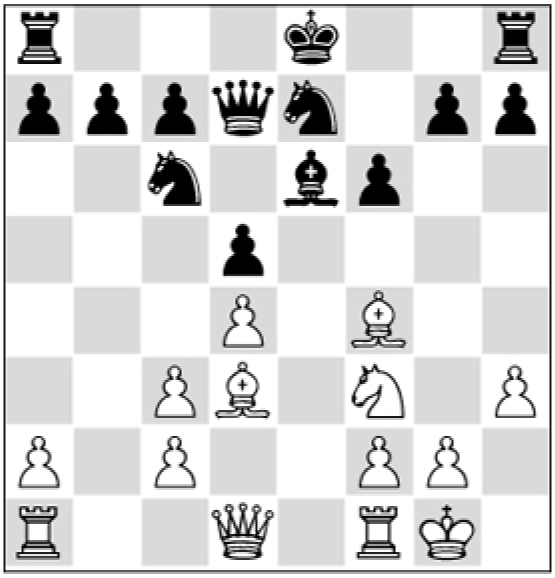
Frank Marshall
Aron Nimzowitsch
New York 1927 (1)

The doubled pawn arose after:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘e7 6.♗d3 ♘bc6 7.h3 ♗e6 8.0-0 ♕d7 9.♗f4

That is to say, there followed:

9…♗xc3 10.bxc3 f6



To safeguard the bishop against a possible ♘g5. Now we see the prophylactic significance of the move 7…♗e6. White now tried an attack along the b-file, which, it will not surprise us, foundered on the dynamic weakness of the doubled-pawn complex. The game continued:

11.♖b1 g5 12.♗g3 0-0-0

Seemingly risky, but it is part of the battle plan initiated on the 9th move.

13.♕e2

13.♘d2!.

13…♖de8!

And not 13…♖dg8, since a flank attack is best undermined by a concentration of force in the center and not by a counterattack on the wing.

14.♖fe1 ♘f5 15.♗xf5

The move 15.♗a6 proves inadequate after 15…bxa6.

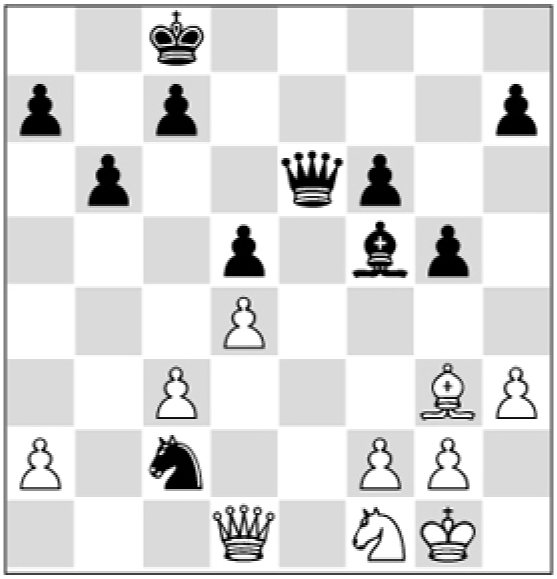
15…♗xf5 16.♕b5 ♘d8 17.♕c5 b6 18.♕a3 ♔b7 19.♕b3 ♘c6

Already a blockader seeks to place itself at c4, to mark as such the evils at c2 and c3.

20.♘d2 ♘a5 21.♕b2 ♖xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♖e8 23.♖xe8 ♕xe8 24.♕b1 ♔c8

Here 24…♕e2 would also be strong.

25.♕d1 ♕e6 26.♘b3 ♘c4 27.♘d2 ♘a3 28.♘f1 ♘xc2



Now we are in an ending with bishops of opposite colors and an extra pawn for Black. Many of the onlookers assessed this endgame as drawn.

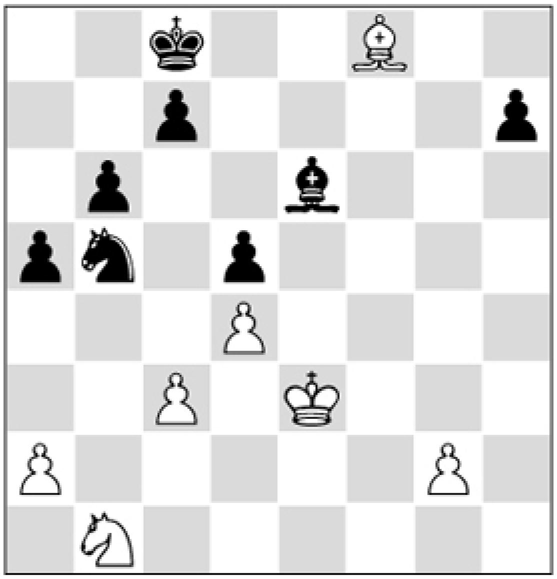
29.♕h5 ♗d3 30.♕d1 ♕e4

Not at once 30…♕e2 because of 31.♕xe2 and 32.♘e3.

31.♘d2

If 31.f3, then, again, 31…♕e2!.

31…♕e2 32.♕xe2 ♗xe2 33.f4 ♘a3 34.fxg5 fxg5 35.♔f2 ♗h5! 36.♗e5 g4 37.hxg4 ♗xg4 38.♔e3 ♗f5 39.♗g7 ♗e6 40.♗f8 ♘b5 41.♘b1 a5

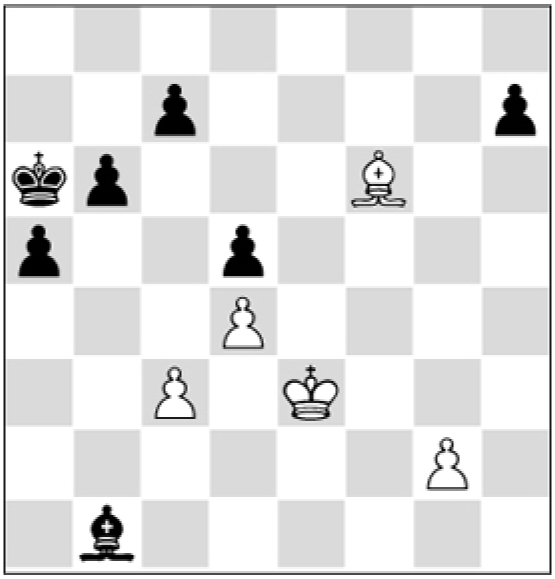


Here 41…♗f5 was also feasible; e.g., 42.a4 ♗xb1 43.axb5 ♗a2 44.♔f4 ♗c4 45.♔e5 ♔d7 46.♗b4 c6! 47.bxc6 ♔xc6 and the stroll of the king to b3.

42.♚d2

A similar winning line, as indicated in the previous note, would occur after 42.♔f4 (to prevent 42…♗f5): 42…♗f7 43.a4 ♗g6 44.axb5 ♗xb1 45.♔e5 ♗a2 46.♔e6 ♗c4, followed by …♔b7 and …c7-c6, etc.

42…♝f5 43.♞a3 ♞xa3 44.♝xa3 ♝b1 45.♝f8 ♝xa2 46.♝g7 ♝b1 47.♚e3 ♚b7 48.♝f6 ♚a6



49.♚d2

On 49.♗d8 Black would win by penetrating with the king to b3; e.g., 49… ♔b5! 50.♗xc7 ♔c4! 51.♗xb6 a4, followed by …♔b3, winning, since the a-pawn cannot be stopped.

It is just this variation that demonstrates the weakness of the… once-here-and- now-gone doubled-pawn complex. For in the passed a-pawn there is ‘mirrored’ the weakness of the defunct white a-pawn, and in the blocked long diagonal (f6 to a1) there is manifested in memoriam the obstructive effect of the pawn block at c3 and d4.

Marshall might have spared himself the rest.

49…♝e4 50.g3 ♚b5 51.♚c1 ♚c4 52.♚b2 c5 53.♝e5 cxd4 54.♝xd4 b5 55.♝b6 a4 56.♝a5 d4 57.cxd4 b4 58.♝b6 a3+ 59.♚a2 ♚b5 60.♝c5 ♚a4

White resigned.

5. From the blockade workshop

(a) The blockading net is broadcast.

(b) The occurrence of gaps in the net is averted through prophylactic play.

(c) The blockading net in action.

(d) The sacrifice for the sake of blockade.

Two pawn armies stand opposite one another and no open lines are available. In these circumstances, can an interlocking of the pawn structure be forced? We have come to know on more than one occasion that an open file is a marvelous instrument for restraint: such a file can impede the intended forward march of the hostile pawn mass, and from this evil of stagnation there may easily arise the further evil of restraint and blockade.

But what is to be done when there are no open files at hand? Answer: the greatest circumspection is called for, for all *violent* attempts to force the interlocking of the pawn structure will come to naught. Compare the following two opening sequences:

I. **Nimzowitsch-Morrison**, London 1927

1.b3 g6 2.♝b2 ♞f6 3.g3 ♝g7 4.♝g2 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.c4 ♞c6

A violent attempt: Black sacrifices two full tempi for nothing more than to get White to play d4-d5 and thereby to bring about a stiffening of the pawn skeleton; but 6… ♘bd7 looks more solid.

7.d5 ♞b8 8.♞c3 ♞bd7

In order to play …a7-a5 followed by …♘c5; Burn’s stratagem.

9.♞f3 a5

And now White could have had an excellent centralized game with 10.0-0 ♘c5 11.♘d4 e5 12.dxe6 fxe6, when Black’s loss of time would have weighed heavily in the balance. But the actual game continuation was

10.♞a4

instead of 10.0-0; after

10…e5 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.0-0 ♛e7 13.♞e1 e5

White got an excellent game that he could have followed up with 14.♘c2 and 15.♘e3.

II. **Fairhurst-Nimzowitsch**, London 1927

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♞f6 3.♞f3 ♝b4+ 4.♝d2 ♛e7 5.g3 ♝xd2+ 6.♞bxd2 d6 7.♝g2 0-0 8.0-0 h6!

Black makes time for this, for …e6-e5 can always be played; on the immediate 8…e5 the opening of the game by 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕c2, with ♘g5-e4 possibly to follow, would not be agreeable for Black.

9.♛c2 ♜e8 10.e4 e5!

Only now is this blockading move worthwhile, seeing that e4 is no longer available to White’s pieces.

11.d5

Better certainly is 11.♖fe1 ♘c6 12.♕c3, though even in this case Black would not stand badly.

11…a5

With the c5-square as a basis of blockading operations.

With a carefully handled strategy in place one may also reasonably expect to make use of preventive measures. And in fact, prophylaxis is shown here to be of great significance. If, for example, in Games 38 and 39, Black manages to preserve his as yet unfinished blockading edifice from severe shocks, he has, in the first place, to thank the application of the stratagem of prophylaxis. And the blockades in Games 40 and 41 would not have held together without preventive measures, even though they appeared to be well engineered and firmly established.

We may therefore say that:

The blockade structure, whether fully developed or as yet incomplete, is always logically dependent on the stratagem of prophylaxis.

The game vs. Colle (41), especially, may be taken to heart by the serious student, for it shows how difficult it is to preserve an extended blockading net against an attempt to demolish it. But this is not impossible, and Games 42 through 45, which I could supplement with many other examples, demonstrate this fact as convincingly as one could wish for.

Game 37

Aron Nimzowitsch
Richard Réti
Karlsbad 1923 (12)

A negative example: Master Réti does not succeed in forcing the interlocking of the pawn formations. (When I say ‘negative’ I mean this only in reference to the theoretical-didactic value of the play; I do not wish to imply that the game was badly played in any way.)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4

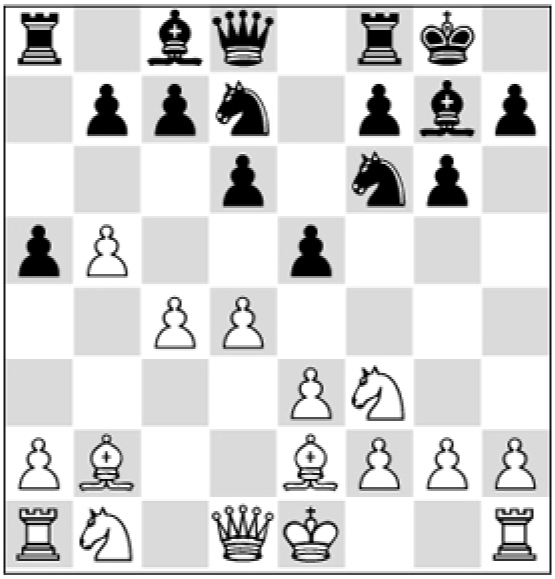
An innovation of mine that Réti himself later had occasion to adopt; see Réti-Capablanca (New York 1924).

3…a5

Of doubtful value.

4.b5 ♗g7 5.♗b2 0-0 6.e3 d6 7.d4 ♘bd7 8.♗e2 e5

This move would be strong only if Black were in a position to force d4-d5, or at least dxe5, for then he would retain control of the blockading point c5; e.g., 9.dxe5? ♘g4, etc.



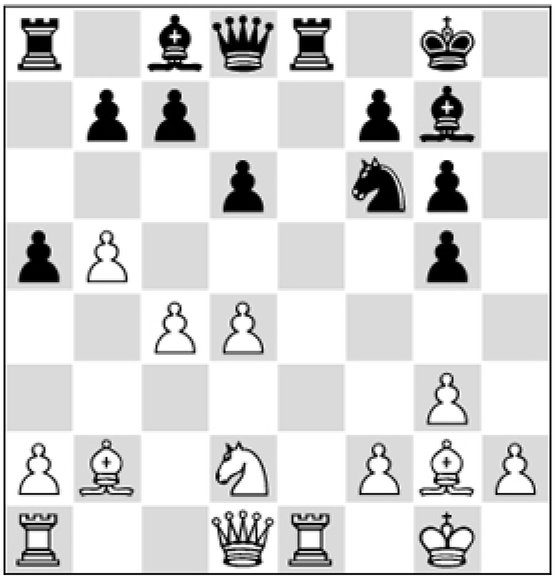
9.0-0 exd4

By this move Black recognizes that the blockading action just initiated has already failed. In the strategic-theoretical sense the only correct move here seems to be 9…♖e8, and if 10.♘bd2, then 10…c6, in order then, according to circumstances, either to offer further protection with …♕c7 or to establish a pawn chain by means of …e5-e4 and …d6-d5.

10.exd4 ♖e8 11.♘bd2

It is not easy in any case for White to make advantageous use of his better pawn formation. With 11.♘c3!, instead of the text move (which does not take his opponent’s …d5-d5 advance sufficiently into account), he would have moved significantly closer to his goal.

11…♘f8 12.♖e1 ♘e6 13.g3 h6 14.♗f1 ♘g5 15.♘xg5 hxg5 16.♗g2



With a knight on c3 instead of d2, the pressure-exerting position that White has now reached would have to be considered most auspicious for a win. But since the knight unfortunately stands on d2, Black can now just about equalize.

16…d5! 17.♖xe8+

The only chance to hold on to his dwindling advantage lay in 15.c5; with this White would have obtained a clearly superior position-at least on the queenside. But whether he could have made anything of this after 17…♗f5 18.♕a4 b6 is more than doubtful. Hence it would appear that, in terms of centralization, the reproachable 11.♘d2 could no longer be rectified.

17…♕xe8 18.cxd5 ♕xb5 19.♕b3 ♗d7 20.♕xb5

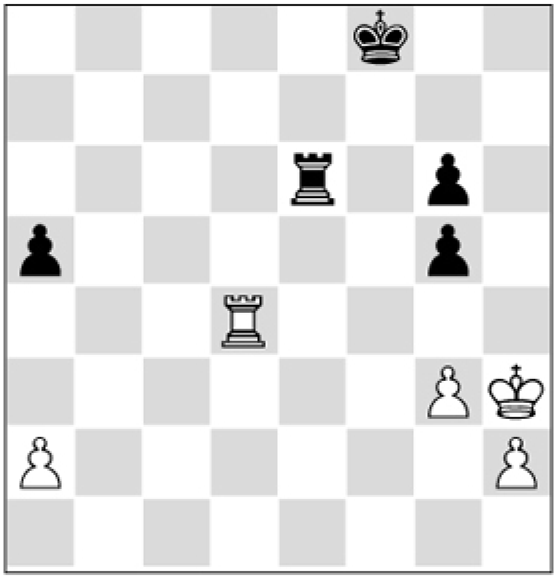
Or 20.♖c1 ♘e8 21.♕xb5 ♗xb5 22.♘e4 g4, and an eventual …♖d8.

20…♗xb5 21.♖c1 ♖e8

Also playable is the simple 21…♘e8; e.g., 22.♘e4 g4 23.h3 gxh3 24.♗xh3 ♖d8, etc.

22.♖xc7 ♖e1+ 23.♘f1 ♗xf1 24.♗xf1 ♘xd5 25.♖xb7 ♖b1 26.♖b8+ ♔h7 27.♖b5 ♘c7 28.♖b7 ♘e6 29.♔g2 ♗xd4 30.♖xf7+ ♔g8 31.♖e7 ♖xb2

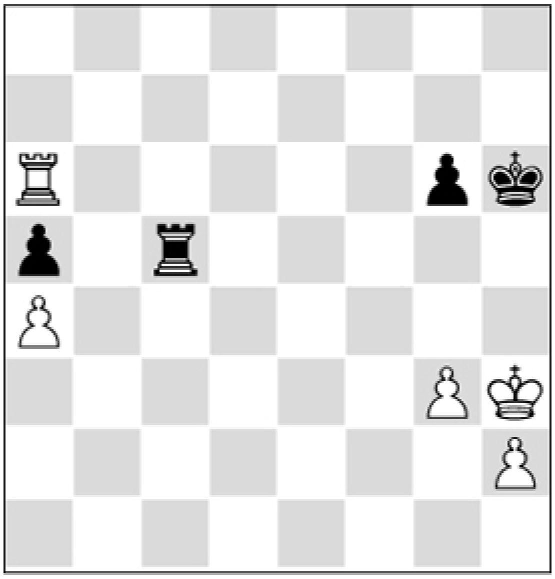
32.♗c4 ♖xf2+ 33.♔h3 ♖f6 34.♗xe6+ ♔f8 35.♖d7 ♖xe6 36.♖xd4



After the interesting skirmishing of the last fourteen moves, a rook ending is reached in which White does stand somewhat better but is unable to force the win.

There followed:

36…♖e5 37.♖d6 ♔f7 38.♖a6 ♖c5 39.♔g4 ♖d5 40.♔h3 ♔g7 41.a4 g4+? 42.♔xg4 ♖d4+ 43.♔g5 ♖d5+ 44.♔h4 ♖c5 45.♔h3 ♔h6



Black’s mistake on the 41st move did provide some room for his king, so he can put up with the loss of the pawn.

46.♖f6 ♖c4 47.♖f4 ♖b4 48.♔g4 g5 49.♖xb4 axb4 50.a5 b3

and the queen ending proved to be unwinnable (given up as a draw, though only at the 90th move).

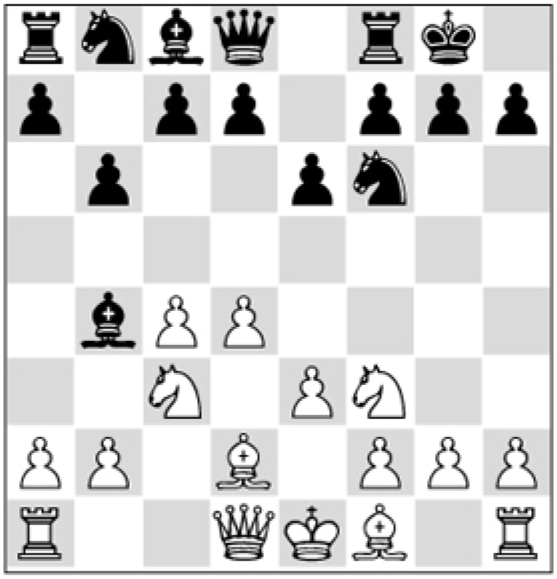
Game 38

Carl Ahues
Aron Nimzowitsch
Berlin 1927 (6)

In contrast to the previous game, the blockader here succeeds in ‘spreading’ the ‘blockading net’ by every trick in the book. For this purpose he makes extensive use of the stratagem of prophylaxis.

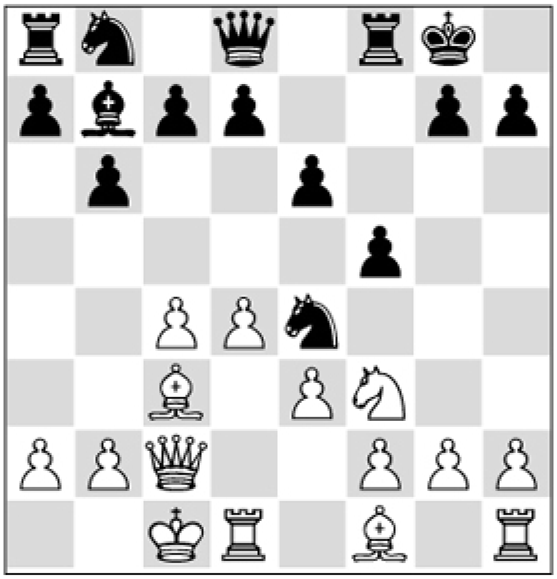
After the moves…

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗d2 0-0 5.♘f3 b6 6.e3



… Black exchanged on c3, for if instead the immediate 6…♗b7, then 7.♗d3 and White would be ready to repel the threatened occupation of e4, as follows: (6…♗b7? 7.♗d3) 7…♗xc3 8.♗xc3 ♘e4 9.♗xe4 ♗xe4 10.♘d2 ♗xg2? 11.♖g1 with good chances of an attack. Hence, 6…♗xc3.

6…♗xc3 7.♗xc3 ♘e4 8.♕c2 ♗b7 9.0-0-0 f5



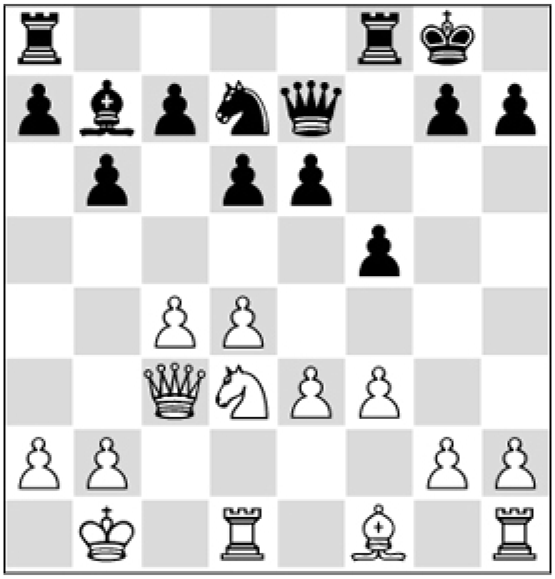
10.♘e5

On 10.♗d3 I would have chosen a *preventive move* against a possible d4-d5 breakthrough, namely 10…♕f6!. If 11.d5, then 11…♘xc3 12.♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♘a6 followed by …♘c5, with a decisive positional advantage for Black.

10…♕e7

There is no hurry in playing …d7-d6; first the e6-square must be strengthened against a possible ♘e5-d3-f4 (in the variation beginning with 10…d6).

11.f3 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 d6 13.♘d3 ♘d7 14.♔b1!



14…♖ad8!

A preventive move by which Black forestalls the ingenious threat 15.c5. Had Black played 14…♖ae8, this threat would have made its presence felt quite unpleasantly by 15.♕a3 a5 16.c5! dxc5 17.dxc5 ♘xc5 18.♘xc5 ♕xc5 19.♕xc5 bxc5 20.♖c1.

15.h4

It is correct to say that 15.♕a3 and 16.c5 would no longer suffice, and indeed because of (15.♕a3) 15…a5 16.c5? dxc5 17.dxc5 ♘e5 (stronger than 17…♘xc5 18.♖c1), with the double threat 18…♘c4 and 18…♘xf3!. On the other hand, the text move is quite double-edged; to be considered was 15.♗e2, and if 15…e5 then 16.♘c1 (not 16.d5 because of 16…♕g5).

15…♕f6

To increase the effect of the coming …e6-e5.

16.♕a3 a5 17.♗e2 e5 18.d5

Black's slow development, emphasizing prophylaxis, has acquitted itself well. White was *forced* to play d4-d5 and already the blockading net encompasses the queenside and the center. Over the next several moves the white kingside, too, will be affected by it.

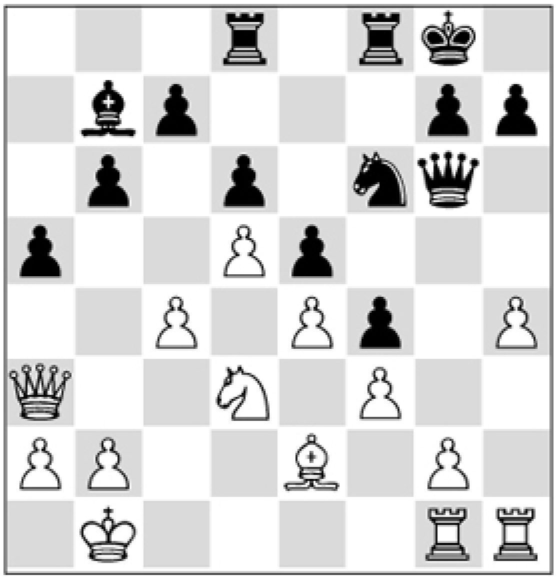
18…f4! 19.e4

Forced, since 19.exf4 exf4 hands the e-file over to Black along with valuable central squares.

19…♕g6

Now the g2-pawn, along with the g3-square and the pawn at h4, seem to be weak.

20.♖dg1 ♘f6



With the intention …♘f6-h5-g3; e.g., 21.c5 (not a bad counter-attack) 21…♘h5! 22.g4 fxg3 23.cxb6 cxb6 24.♕b3 ♗a6 25.♘xe5 dxe5 26.♗xa6 g2 and wins.

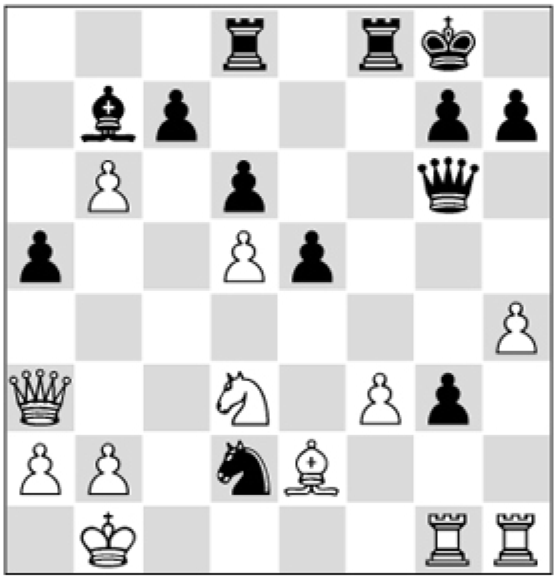
21.g3 fxg3 22.c5

A spirited attempt to save the game, which, however, is refuted by a counter-sacrifice.

22…♘xe4!

A beautiful combination! It runs: 23.fxe4 ♕xe4 24.♗d1 (24.♗f1? ♖xf1+ and …g3-g2) 24…g2 25.♖h2 ♗a6 26.♗c2 ♖f1+, or (23.fxe4 ♕xe4) 24.♖e1 g2 25.♖hg1 dxc5 and wins.

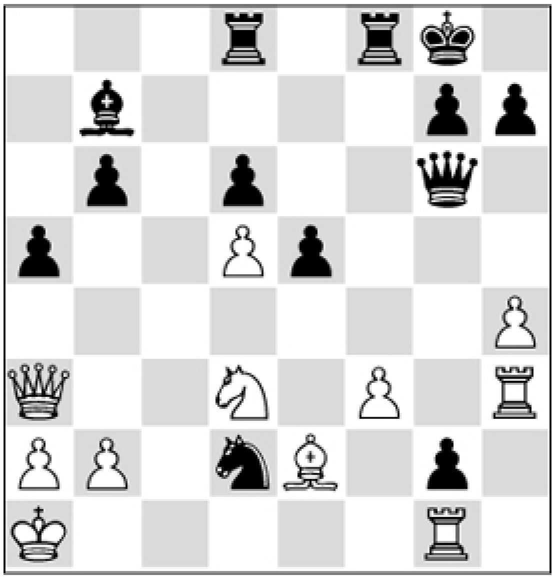
23.cxb6 ♘d2+



24.♚a1

On other moves by the king there would have been some pretty little evolutions on the part of the knight, with gain of tempo at the cost of both the king and queen; e.g., 24.♔c2 ♘c4 25.♕c3 ♘e3+ and 26…♘xd5, with an attack on the queen, or 25.♕b3 (instead of 25.♕c3) ♘e3+ and 26…♗xd5, again with gain of time; or 24.♔c1 ♕h6.

24…cxb6 25.♜h3 g2



26.♛c3

On 26.♖h2 I meant to sacrifice the queen with 26…♘xf3 27.♖hxg2 ♘xg1 28.♖xg6 hxg6.

26…♕h6 27.♖xg2 ♖c8 28.♕a3 ♘xf3 29.♖h1 ♗xd5

More ‘cruel’ than 29…e4, for now many of White’s pieces are hanging. He therefore resigned.

Game 39

Carl Ahues

Aron Nimzowitsch

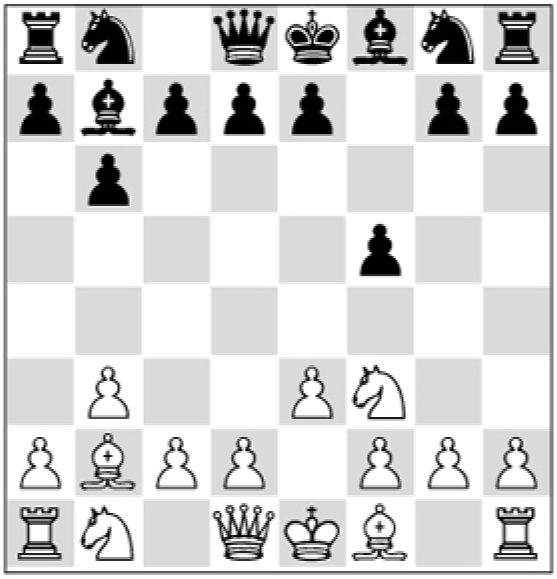
Kecskemet 1927 (1)

The interesting moment in this game’s struggle could be characterized as follows: Black has forced the interlocking of the pawn formations (13.d5), but he cannot derive any advantage from this as the blockading continuation …♘c5 would fail to a potential breakthrough by his opponent. But he anticipates this counter-chance, enabling a smooth execution of the blockading action – which incidentally becomes intensified through a simultaneous attack. Now for the game itself.

1.♘f3 b6 2.e3

On 2.e4 there would follow 2…♗b7 3.♘c3 e6 4.d4 ♗b4 and …d7-d6, when Black would be somewhat cramped, certainly, but he would not stand badly.

2…♗b7 3.b3 f5 4.♗b2



4…e6!

4…♘f6 would not be good because of 5.♗xf6 exf6 6.♘h4 g6, and now perhaps 7.♗c4, to provoke …d7-d5; e.g., 7…d5 8.♗e2, when we are inclined to give White the preference.

5.♘e5

Imitating his opponent’s Dutch build-up. Better is 5.c4 and 6.♘c3.

5…♘f6 6.f4 g6 7.c4 ♗g7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♕e2 d6

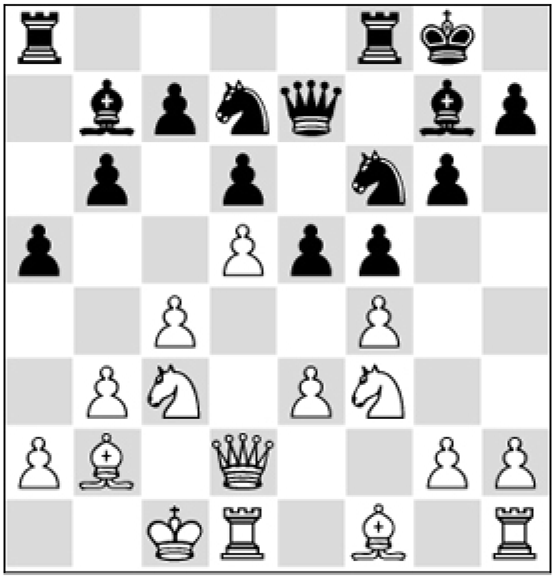
Black has prepared this advance well, as he is ready to follow up with …e6-e5.

10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.d4 ♕e7 12.0-0-0 e5

It is achieved.

13.d5 a5 14.♕d2

White is on the verge of catching up with his development. His position is apparently quite secure, for in reply to a possible 14…♘c5 he has 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.d6!, with a breakthrough not unfavorable for him.



14…♘h5!!

A preventive combination directed against the breakthrough possibility indicated above. First, g2-g3 is to be provoked.

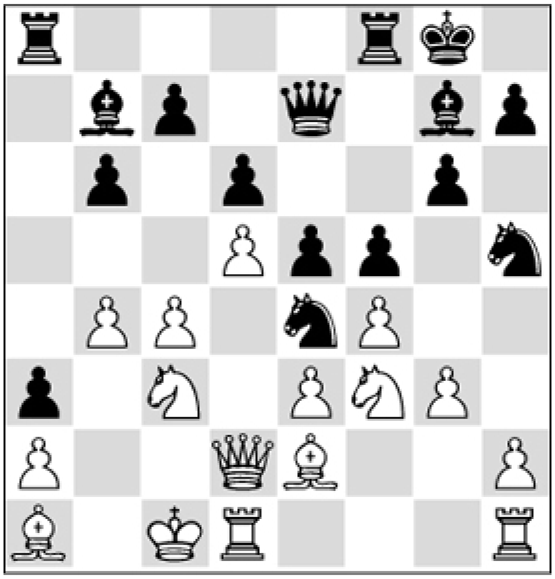
15.g3 ♘c5

For now, 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.d6 would be impossible because of a subsequent …♗xf3.

16.♗e2 a4! 17.b4 a3! 18.♗a1

Black’s success consists in the fact that the bishop on a1 is now unprotected.

18…♘e4



19.♘xe4

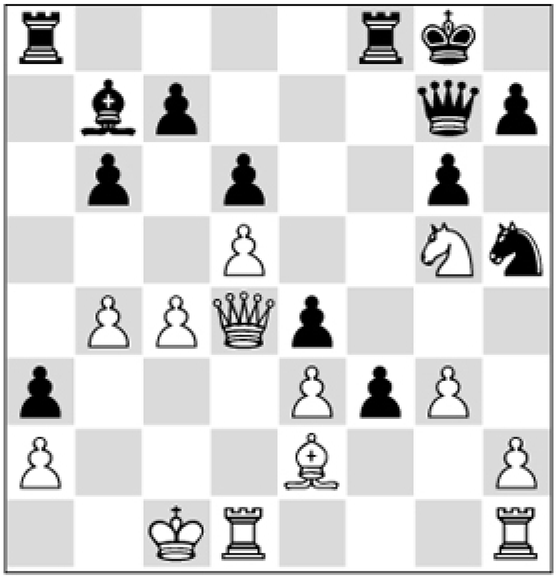
If 19.♕e1, then 19…exf4 20.exf4 ♘xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗xc3 22.♕xc3 ♕xe2.

19…fxe4 20.♘g5 exf4

After the exchange of bishops on g7, mate in two will be threatened.

21.♗xg7 ♕xg7 22.♕d4 f3

Black’s long combination has borne fruit. Now it is just a matter of holding onto what has been gained.



23.♝f1 ♜fe8 24.♝h3

Of course, not 24.♘xe4 because of 24… ♖xe4.

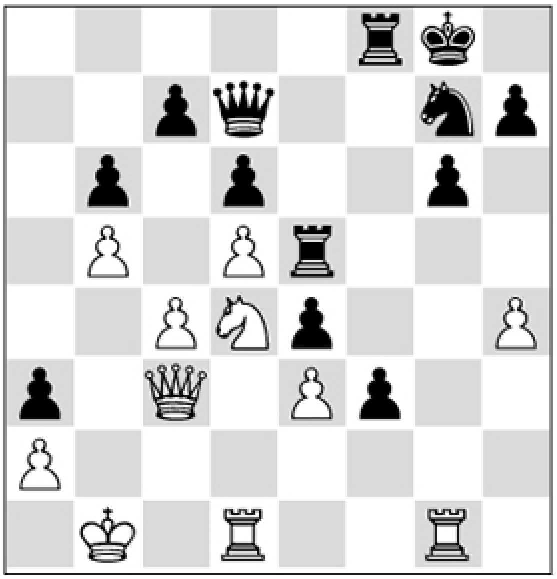
24…♝c8

24…♖a4 would be dubious because of 25.♗e6+ ♔f8 26.♕xg7+ and 27.♗d7, although in this case too Black, with 27…♖xb4, would get sufficient compensation for the exchange.

25.♝xc8 ♜axc8 26.b5 ♜e5 27.♞e6 ♛e7 28.♚b1 ♞g7 29.♞f4 ♛d7 30.h4

Black threatened 30…g5.

30…♞f5 31.♛c3 ♞xg3 32.♜hg1 ♞h5 33.♞e6 ♞g7 34.♞d4 ♜f8



White resigned. For if 35.♕xa3, there follows 35…♖h5 36.♖h1 ♕g4 37.♖dg1 ♖xh4! 38.♖xg4 ♖xh1+ and 39…f2, winning.

The value of the strategy chosen by Black at the 14th move is clearly shown by the following variation: White *forgoes* 15.g3 and plays instead 15.♗e2. Then 15…♘c5!. If now 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.d6 cxd6 18.♕xd6 ♕xd6 19.♖xd6 ♗h6; e.g., 20.♘xe5 ♗xe3+ 21.♔c2 ♗xg2 22.♖hd1 ♘f4 and Black should win.

Game 40

Ernst Schweinburg

Aron Nimzowitsch

Berlin 1927 (4)

A French Exchange Variation with a somewhat unusual bishop development:

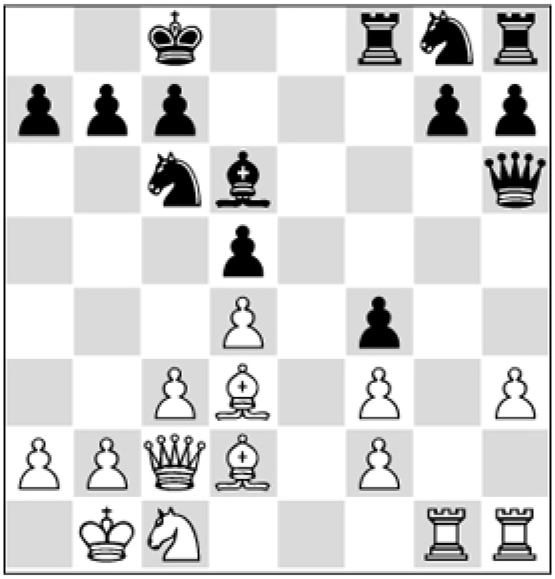
1.e4 ♞c6 2.♞f3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.exd5 exd5 5.♝d3 ♝g4 6.♝e3? ♝d6 7.c3 ♞ge7 8.♞bd2 ♛d7 9.♞b3 0-0-0 10.h3 ♝h5 11.♛c2 f5 12.0-0-0 f4 13.♝d2 ♝xf3 14.gxf3 ♛e6!

Only with this move does the exchange make sense. Otherwise (e.g., on 14…g6), White would proceed to roll up the kingside with h3-h4-h5. If we refer back to Game 33, 14…♕e6 will be understood as a preventive measure, a description it entirely deserves!

15.♜dg1

15.♗xh7? g6.

15…♛h6! 16.♚b1 ♜df8 17.♞c1 ♞g8!

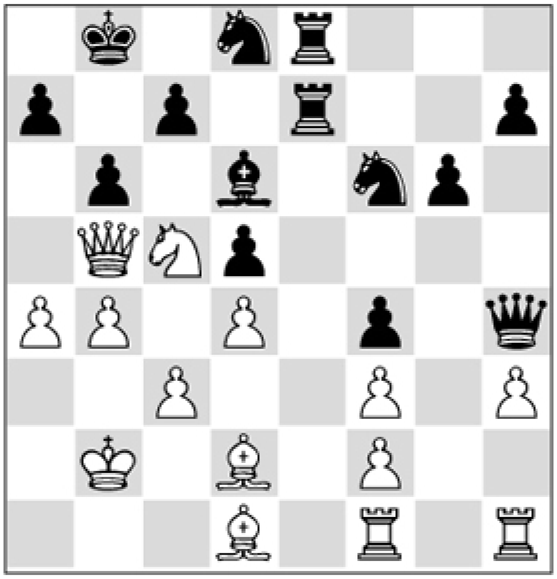


Again a preventive move. As …g7-g6 cannot be avoided, the possible rolling-up attack mentioned above must be prevented with …♘g8-f6-h5.

18.b4 g6 19.♕a4 ♔b8 20.♘b3 ♕h5 21.♗e2 ♘f6 22.♘c5 ♘d8 23.♔b2 ♖e8 24.♗d1 ♕h4

With this move Black calmly prepares the exploitation of the weak-square complex. Without the prophylaxis at moves 14 and 15 this would not have been possible – clear proof of the correctness of our contention that blockade without preventive play is an absurdity.

25.♖f1 ♖e7 26.♕b5 ♖he8 27.a4 b6



Since his position is superior in every respect, Black now proceeds to liquidate the knight on c5 without troubling himself about any weaknesses that might then be created in his own position.

But violent measures are seldom good, and besides, White’s position is merely ‘limited in mobility’ but not actually weak. Hence a more gradual strategy should have been preferred, namely, with 27…c6 28.♕d3 ♘d7 (threatening …♘b6-c4) 29.a5, and now 29…a6!. White’s pawn advance would then seem to be stopped and Black would have time and leisure for elaborate maneuvers such as, say, 30…♔a7, 31…♗c7, and …♘f7-d6-c4, when White could hardly ward off the ever-increasing pressure.

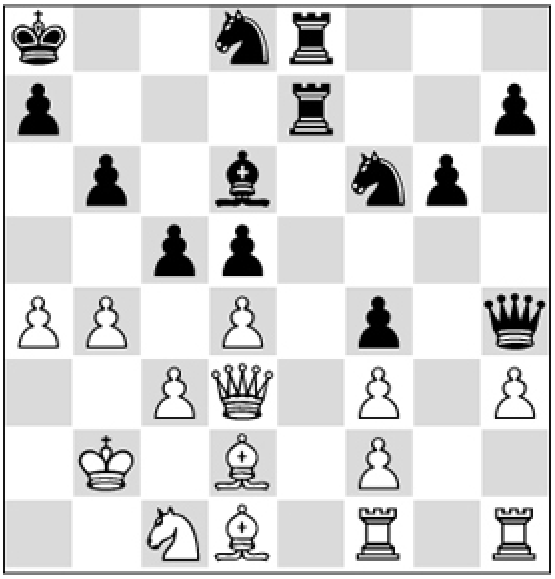
28.♘b3 ♚a8 29.♘c1

Deserving preference was 29.♕a6; e.g., 29…♘b7, with a complex game that is only slightly in Black’s favor.

29…c6!

If at once 29…c5, then 30.a5.

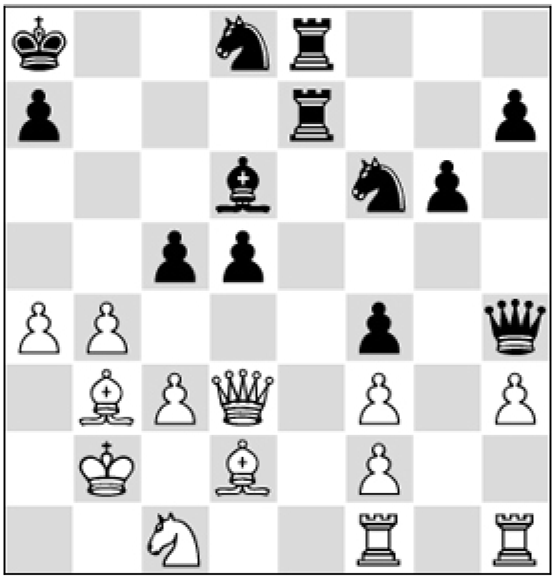
30.♛d3 c5



31.dxc5

On his 29th move White neglected to fix the a6-square as a weakness. Now, however, it is too late, although demonstrating this would be difficult; e.g., 31.♕a6 (instead of 31.dxc5) 31…cxd4 32.a5! (suggested by Dr. Lasker) 32…dxc3+ 33.♗xc3 d4! 34.♗xd4 ♘c6 35.axb6 ♘xd4 36.b7+ ♖xb7 37.♕xd6, and now the simple liquidation 37…♖xb4+ 38.♕xb4 ♖b8. After 39.♕xb8+ ♔xb8 40.♘d3 ♘d5 we cannot see why Black's extra pawn in conjunction with his 'centralization' should not be enough to win. After the move played, Black's attack becomes overwhelming.

31…bxc5 32.♗b3



32…♘b7!

A decisive pawn sacrifice. Insufficient, instead, would be the continuation 32…c4 33.♗xc4 dxc4 34.♕xd6 ♖d7 on account of 35.♕xf4 g5 36.♕xg5.

33.♗xd5 ♘xd5 34.♕xd5 cxb4 35.a5

A final, spirited attempt. On 35.cxb4, 35…♖d8 would be decisive.

35…♖d8

The threat 36.a6 can be ignored.

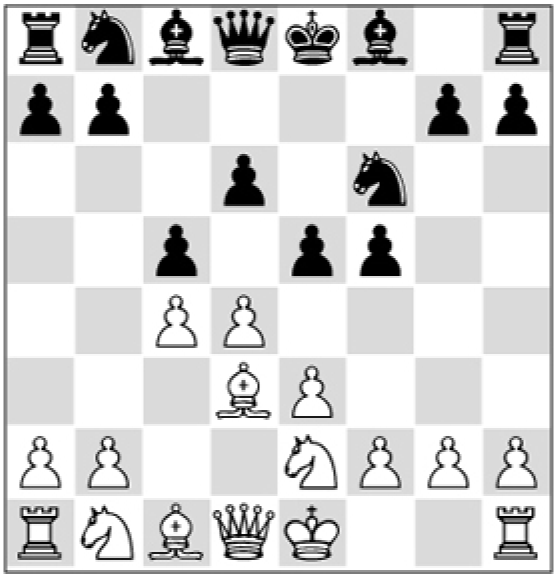
36.a6 bxc3+ 37.♔c2 ♗b4 38.♕c6 ♖xd2+ 39.♔b1 ♔b8

This move would also have followed 39.♔b3. White resigned.

Game 41

Edgar Colle
Aron Nimzowitsch
Baden-Baden 1925 (1)

1.d4 f5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♗d3 d6 4.♘e2 e5 5.c4 c5



Black believes he has accumulated sufficient mobility in his pawn pair at e5 and f5, so he thinks it is only desirable when the center and the queenside are ‘mummified’. He therefore attempts to force this.

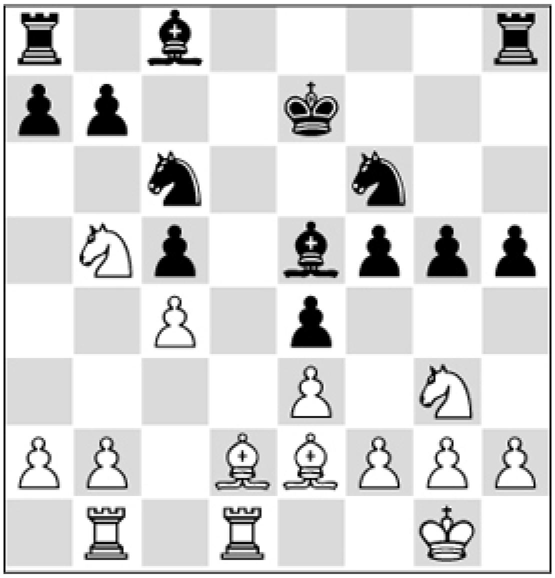
6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♘bc3 g5

Boldly played, for the ‘mummification’ Black is striving for has not come about yet; White is in a better position to open up the center. If he does so, will Black be adequate to the *two-fold* task of securing the d-file against penetration and protecting his kingside pawns against loss?

8.dxc5! dxc5 9.♘g3 e4 10.♗e2 ♗d6

The consolidating move.

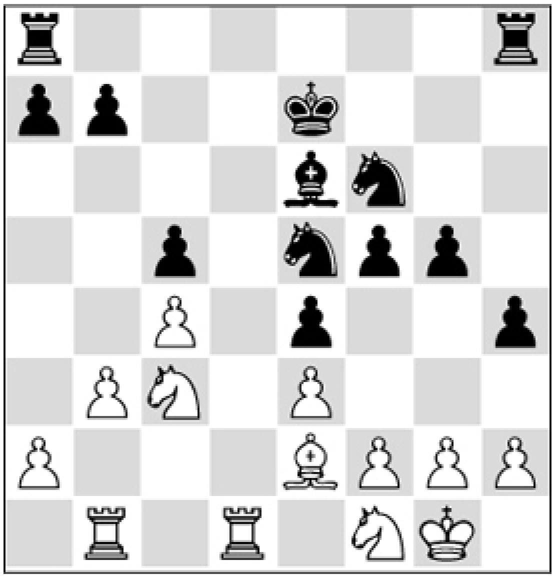
11.♘b5 ♗e5 12.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 13.♖d1+ ♔e7 14.♖b1 h5 15.♗d2



15…h4

The following line deserved preference: 15…f4 16.♘f1 ♗g4!; e.g., 17.♗xg4 hxg4 18.exf4 gxf4 19.♖e1 ♔e6, with a strong central formation. Or 18.♖e1 f3! 19.g3 a6 20.♘a3 ♖hd8 21.b4 ♖d3 22.♘c2 ♖ad8 and wins.

16.♘f1 ♗e6 17.♗c3 ♗xc3 18.♘xc3 ♘e5 19.b3



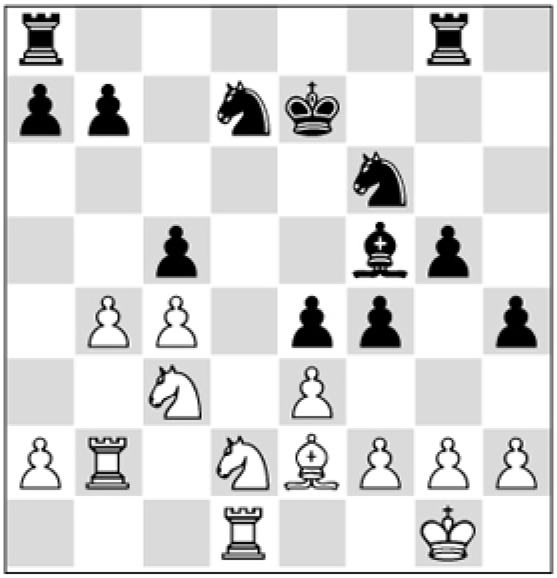
19…♖hg8

Here and on the next move Black omits an important *prophylactic measure*, namely …b7-b6 (to render b3-b4 pointless), and this neglect results in the loss of all his advantage.

20.♜b2 f4 21.♞d2! ♝f5 22.b4

Blasting open the blockading net that has been cast with so much trouble.

22…♞ed7



23.exf4

More advisable here is to continue the breakthrough started with b3-b4, hence 23.bxc5 ♘xc5 24.♘b3 ♘xb3 25.♖xb3 b6 26.♖b5, etc.

23…gxf4 24.♜e1 ♚f7

24…♔f8 should have been played.

25.♞dxe4! ♞xe4 26.♝h5+ ♚g7 27.♞xe4 ♚h6

In a bad position, Black finds an interesting saving maneuver.

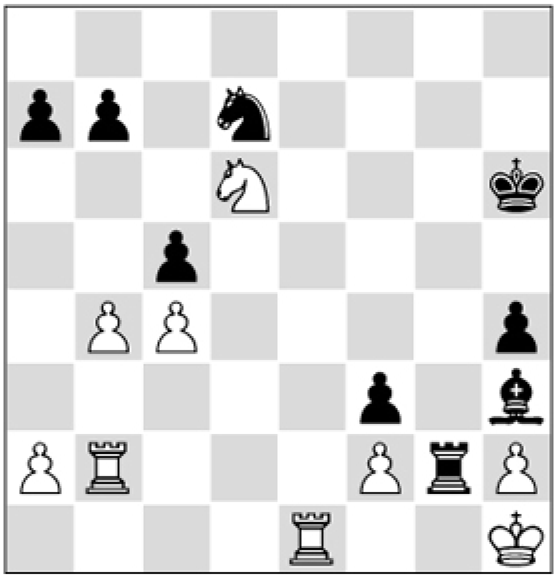
28.♝f7

If 28.♗f3, then 28…♘e5.

28…f3!! 29.♝xg8 ♜xg8 30.♞d6

30.g3 would have been countered by 30…♖e8.

30…♜xg2+ 31.♚h1 ♝h3



32.♜g1

He should have been content with a draw, which could be attained by, for example, 32.♘f7+ ♔g7 33.♘e5 ♖g5 34.♘xd7 ♗g2+, etc.

32…♞e5!

Now, White dare not capture because of mate in two moves, and 33…♘d3 is threatened.

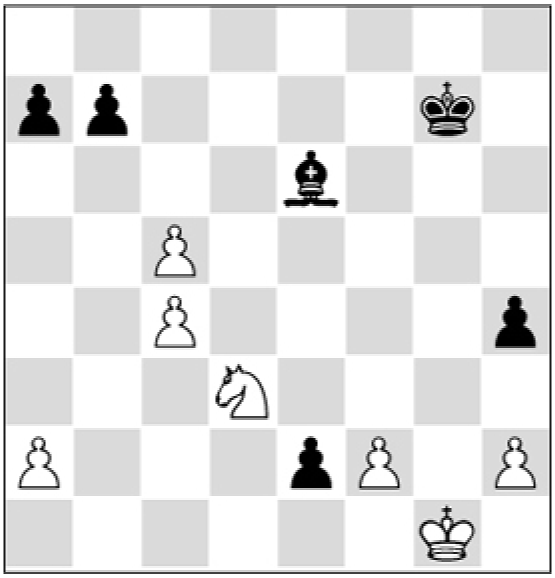
33.bxc5

Interesting here is the win after 33.♖d2, that is, 33…♘g4! 34.♖xg2 fxg2+ 35.♔g1 ♘e5!! (the return motif!).

33…♞d3 34.♜d2 ♜xg1+ 35.♚xg1 ♞f4

Terrible distress due to mate threats –even with so little material!

36.♞f7+ ♚g7 37.♞e5 ♞e2+ 38.♜xe2 fxe2 39.♞d3 ♝e6



The ending is in Black’s favor, as his king now intervenes.

40.a3 ♗xc4 41.♘e1 ♔f6 42.f3 ♔e5 43.♔f2 ♔d4 44.♘g2 ♔xc5 45.♘xh4 b5 46.f4 a5 47.♘f3 a4 48.f5 b4 49.axb4+ ♔xb4 50.f6 a3 51.♘d4 a2 52.♘c2+ ♔c3

0-1

Game 42

Rudolf Hage

Aron Nimzowitsch

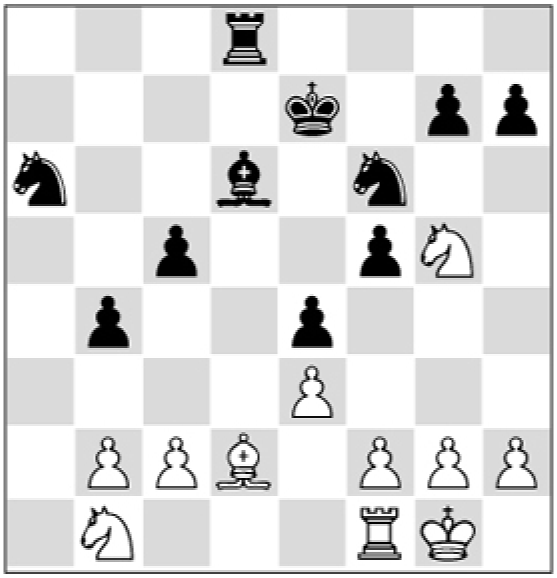
Simultaneous exhibition, Arnstadt 1926

This game forms a pendant to the previous one and shows us how a blockade could have been worked out in the earlier game, untarnished by any sins of omission.

1.d4 f5 2.e3 d6 3.♗d3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♗b5+ c6 6.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7.♗c4 ♗d6 8.♘f3 ♘f6 9.♘c3

Instead of this, the sequence a2-a4, b2-b3, and ♗b2 or ♗a3 looks much better.

9…♔e7 10.a3 ♖d8 11.♗d2 b5 12.♗a2 a5 13.0-0 b4 14.♘b1 c5 15.♗c4 e4 16.♘g5 ♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.axb4 axb4 19.♖xa6 ♘xa6



Black’s blockade shows the same component parts as in the previous game, namely the open d-file, the central square e5, and the qualitative majority on the king’s wing.

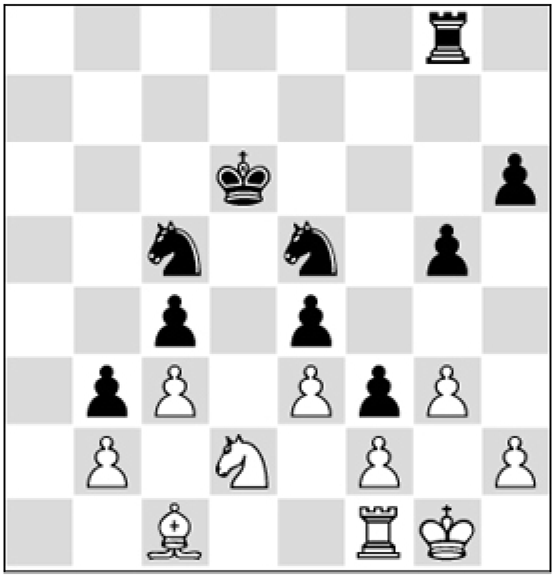
Exacerbating the situation for White is his opponent’s queenside, which is threatening to him in the sense of a blockade.

20.c3 h6 21.♘h3 ♘g4 22.g3 ♘e5 23.♔g2 g5 24.♗c1 b3 25.♘d2 c4 26.♘g1 ♘c5 27.♘e2 ♖g8 28.♘d4 f4

If now 29.exf4 gxf4 30.♖e1, then 30…e3! 31.fxe3 fxg3.

29.♘f5+ ♔e6 30.♘xd6 f3+ 31.♔g1 ♔xd6

White’s position now gives the impression of hopelessness.



32.♖d1 ♔e6 33.♘b1 ♘cd3 34.♘a3 ♔d5 35.♘b5 ♖b8 36.♘a3 ♖a8 37.h3 ♔c5 38.♔f1 ♘xc1

Leading to an immediate win.

39.♖xc1 ♘d3 40.♖b1 ♘xb2 41.♖xb2 ♖xa3 42.♖b1 b2

0-1

A real blockade game, with a blockading net spanning both wings as well as the center. Without wishing to discount the importance of the operations on the *wings*, we should like nevertheless to remark that we are inclined to regard the central maneuver around e5 and d3 as more important. It was truly a blockade from the center outward!

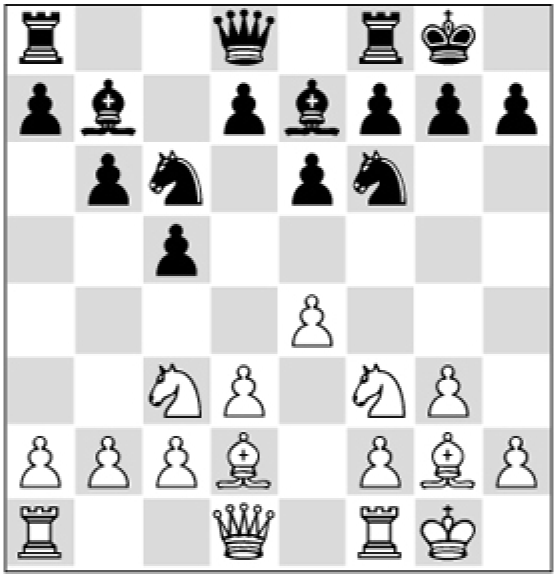
Game 43

Max Blümich
Aron Nimzowitsch
Breslau 1925 (4)

This game, which incidentally is missing from the tournament book (most likely the result of an oversight), we recommend for study by the reader as a blockade game. It is also at the same time a *files game* from A to Z! The events along the open files have therefore been examined with special care.

Initially, the game developed in a very closed way:

1.♘f3 e6 2.g3 b6 3.♗g2 ♗b7 4.0-0 c5 5.d3 ♘f6 6.e4 ♗e7 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♗d2 ♘c6



9.e5

This livens up the game, but it would have been less committal to play 9.♔h1 followed by ♘g1 and f2-f4.

9…♘e8 10.♘e4 ♖c8

A preventive move directed against a potential c2-c3 followed by d3-d4.

11.♗c3 b5

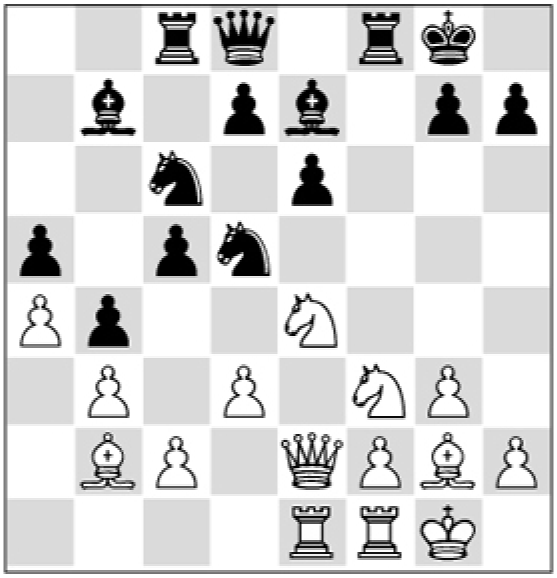
To provoke b2-b3, the purpose of which will soon become clear.

12.b3 f5! 13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♕e2 ♘d5 15.♗b2 b4

Now Black has a central knight that cannot be driven off. But White has one as well, and it is difficult to see how matters are to proceed.

16.♖ae1 a5 17.a4

Not good; 17.♘fd2 followed by f2-f4 is the right plan here.



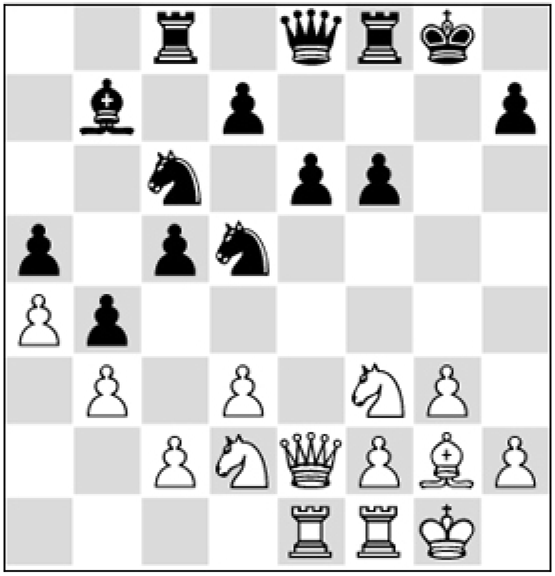
17…♕e8

He should have imperturbably opened the game with 17…bxa3 18.♗xa3 ♘d4 19.♘xd4 (White cannot go in for 19.♕d1 because of 19…♘c3! 20.♘xc3 ♗xf3 21.♕c1 ♕e8 and 22…♕h5) 19…cxd4 and the c-file, in conjunction with the preventive 10…♖c8, would have become an important factor. After the text move, the threatened deadening of the position is difficult to avoid.

18.♘ed2

The other knight should have gone there; e.g., 18.♘fd2 ♘d4 19.♕d1, with f2-f4 and ♘f3 to follow.

18…♗f6 19.♗xf6 gxf6!



Black’s position is becoming noticeably more compact, and to the same extent the value of White’s semi-open e-file is reduced. The e6-square is like a block of granite, while the points e4 and e5 already find themselves under the control of the second player.

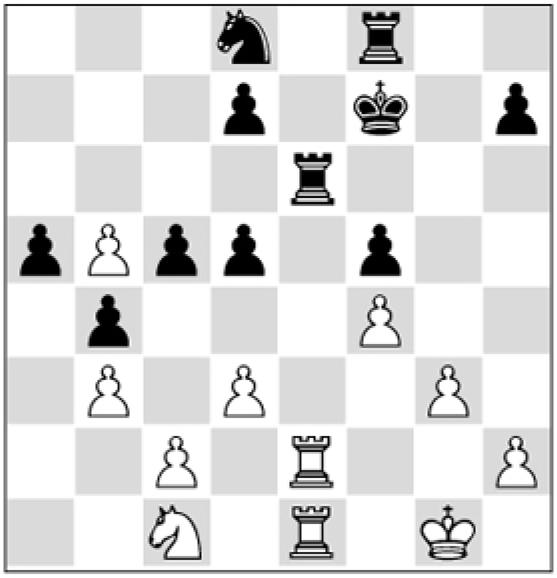
20.♘c4 ♕h5 21.♘d4 ♕xe2 22.♘xe2 ♖c7 23.f4 ♗a6 24.♗xd5 exd5 25.♘d6 f5

The valiant d6-knight! In the process of securing the play along the e-file it has found itself in a blind alley. Now it will be interesting to see whether the white e-file can offset this.

26.♖f2 ♘d8 27.♘c1 ♖c6 28.♘b5 ♗xb5 29.axb5 ♖e6

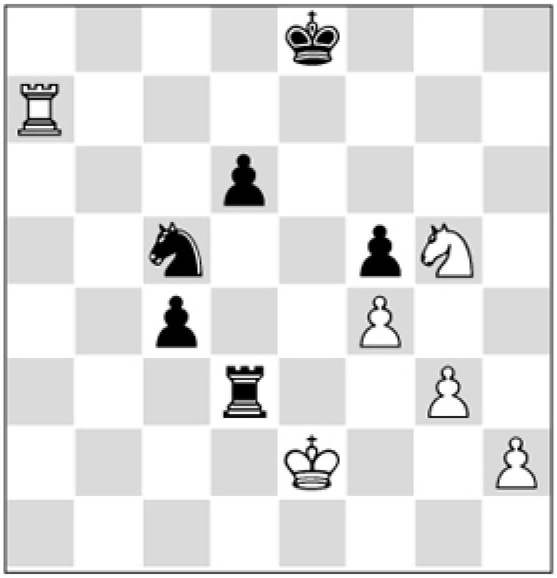
There we have it: 29…♖b6 has to be for-borne out of respect for the white e-file.

30.♖fe2 ♔f7



31.♚f2

Play along the e-file through occupation of the outpost e5 would seem to be an urgent necessity here. Black then would have had a most difficult problem to solve: 31.♖e5 ♔f6 32.♔f2 d6! 33.♖xe6+ (not 33.♖xd5? because of 33…♖xe1 34.♔xe1 ♔e6) 33…♘xe6 34.♘e2 ♖b8 35.♖a1! ♖xb5 36.c4 bxc3 37.♘xc3 ♖xb3 38.♘xd5+ ♔f7! 39.♖xa5 ♖xd3 40.♖a7+ ♔e8! 41.♘f6+ ♔d8 42.♘xh7 c4 43.♘g5! ♘c5! 44.♔e2 and now 44…♔e8!.



Black threatens to march with the c-pawn, which on the 44th move would have been mistaken because of …♘e6+. There follows 45.♖c7! c3 46.♘f7 (if now 46…c2? then 47.♘xd6+, etc.; but if 46…♖d5, in order after 47.♘xd6+ to play the king to 47…♔f8 – and not to d8 on account of 48.♖xc5 – there follows 48.♘b7! c2? 49.♘xc5 c1♕ 50.♘e6+ and wins) 46…♖d2+ (the winning move!) 47.♔e3 ♖d5 48.♘xd6+ ♔f8 and the c-pawn marches in with check. The fact that the game would only have been delayed by 49.♖f7+ ♔g8 50.♖xf5 c2 51.♖xd5 c1♕+ is a point we mention only in passing.

In the position after the 44th move, White's game could not be saved after other moves, either; e.g., 45.h4 c3 46.h5 c2 47.♖a1 ♖a3 48.♖c1 ♘b3 49.♖xc2 ♘d4+ and wins. This is the solution, long-winded but very exciting throughout, to the problem posed at move 31. It is *possible* that 44…♔c8 (to play …♔b8 if the occasion arises) furnishes a partial alternate solution, a fact that detracts little from the beauty of the solution given by the author. Hence, the 'blind alley' outweighs the e-file.

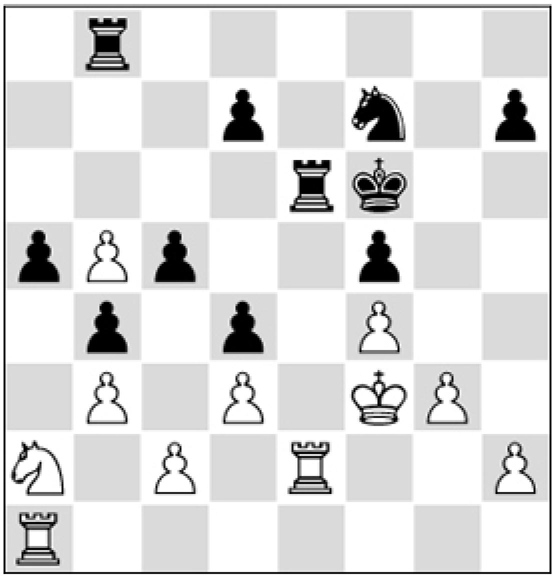
31…♚f6 32.♚f3

White still had the opportunity with 32.♖e5 to conjure up on the board the problem sketched above. And in any case, the technique of line play should not suddenly break down! Utilization of a file, in particular the occupation of a forward outpost, should be a simple matter. Compare the deliberations on the open file in *My System* (Chapter 1).

32…♞f7

Securing e5 against invasion. The b-pawn is lost.

33.♞a2 d4! 34.♜a1 ♜b8



At last it is the right moment to bring home the spoils. We observe from this point on a marked blockading effect. The movements and maneuvers of the white pieces are executed clumsily and with an increasing internal friction, while the light-footed black pieces command the board.

35.♗c1 ♖xb5 36.♖d2 ♗d8 37.♗e2 ♗c6 38.♗g1 d5

Only on the 38th move is the queen’s pawn set in motion!

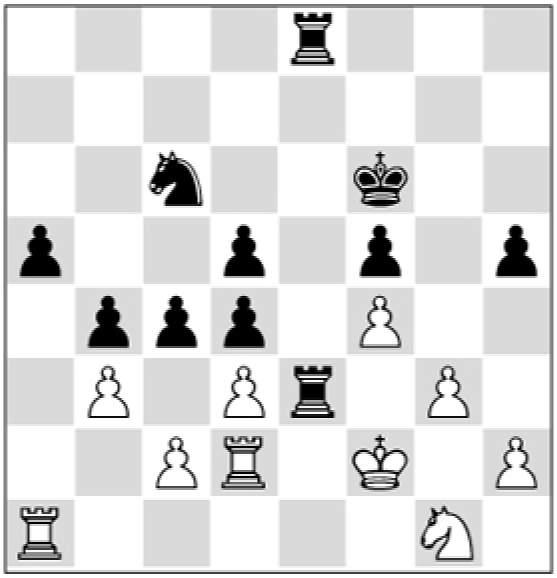
39.♗e2 ♖b8 40.♖a4 ♖be8

Now it is Black who is master of the e-file.

41.♖a1 h5 42.♗g1 ♖e3+ 43.♔f2

Now at last the position is ripe for a breakthrough.

43…c4



44.♖ad1

Or 44.dxc4 dxc4 45.bxc4 ♖c3.

44...c3

A sacrificial combination as the crown of the blockading edifice.

45.♖e2 a4! 46.bxa4 b3 47.cxb3 ♘b4

And Black won:

48.♖xe3 ♖xe3 49.♘e2 c2 50.♖a1 ♘xd3+ 51.♔f1 ♖xe2 52.♔xe2 c1♕ 53.♖xc1 ♘xc1+ 54.♔f3 ♘xb3 55.h3 d3

White resigned.

Game 44

Walther von Holzhausen
Aron Nimzowitsch
Dresden 1926

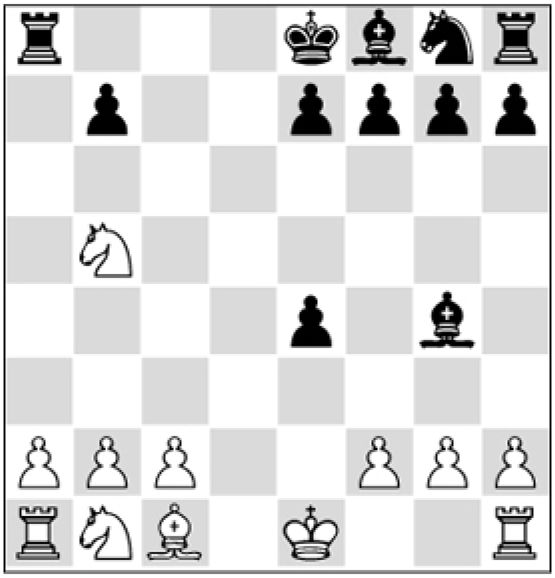
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 d5

An innovation of mine that I first tried out vs. Rubinstein at Karlsbad 1923.

5.♗b5

Best here seems 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.exd5 ♕xd5 7.♘c3 ♕xd1+ 8.♘xd1, when White has the more compact formation, even if in other respects the game may be even.

5...dxe4 6.♘xc6 ♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 a6 8.♘d4+ axb5 9.♘xb5 ♗g4+ 10.♔e1



10…♖d8

Black avoids castling queenside, as it would appear to be less than sound. There could follow (10…0-0-0) 11.♘1c3 e5 12.h3! ♗h5 13.g4 ♗g6 14.a4 and a4-a5-a6, or 12…♗d7! (instead of 12…♗h5) 13.♗e3 ♗b4 14.♔e2. In both cases Black's king position seems vulnerable to attack.

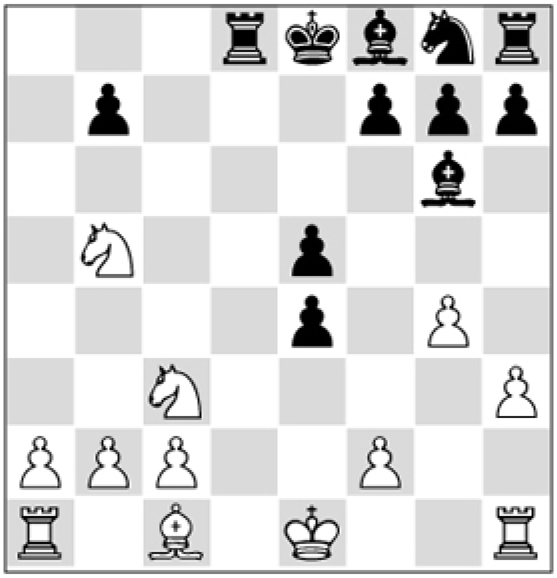
11.♘1c3 e5

As good as this move may look, it in no way meets the strict requirements that a blockading strategy demands of a player. The *foundation* of blockading operations in this position was to be found along the d1-g4 diagonal, which, therefore, had to be protected and *overprotected* – all the more so as his opponent already has it in mind to rudely blow up said foundation, namely with 12.h3 ♗h5 13.g4. The right method for setting up the blockade lay in 11…f5 (instead of 11…e5). If then 12.h3 ♗h5 13.g4 fxg4 14.♘xe4 gxh3. White, to be sure, could avoid heavy losses by means of 15.♗f4 ♗f3 16.♘g5 ♗xh1 17.♘c7+ ♔d7 18.♘f7, but after the further 18…♗f3! 19.♘xh8 e5! 20.♗xe5 ♗d6 21.♗xd6 ♔xd6 his game would be ripe for resignation. But if White, for the sake of quietly developing his game, should renounce all attempts to violently break up the position, playing, for example, 12.♗f4, then follows 12…♘f6 followed by …e7-e6 and …♔f7, and White would have no compensation for the dislocation of his rook at h1. After the text move, on the other hand, the issue remains in doubt.

12.h3! ♝h5

I couldn’t quite decide on 12…♗d7 13.♘c7+ ♔e7 14.♘3d5+ ♔d6 15.♗e3.

13.g4 ♝g6

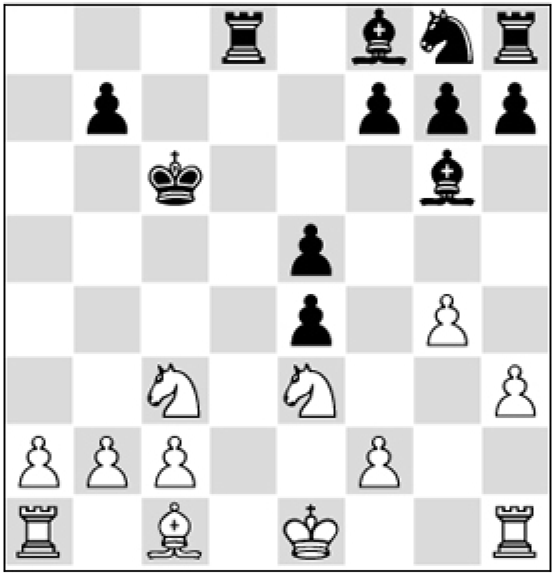


14.♞c7+

The continuation indicated here is 14.♗e3 and, if 14…f5, then 15.♔e2, when the dislocation of the rook would be overcome. Black would then be obliged strategically to play for the recapture of the proud diagonal (d1-h5), for example with 15…fxg4! 16.hxg4 ♘f6 17.g5 ♗h5+ 18.♔f1 ♗f3 19.♖h4 ♘g4 20.♘xe4 ♗xe4 21.♖xg4 ♗xc2 22.♘c3, with an approximately level game. This variation impresses by its rigorously logical construction.

14…♚d7 15.♞7d5 ♚c6 16.♞e3

Tempting here was 16.♗e3, but after 16…♖xd5 17.♘xd5 ♔xd5 18.♖d1+ ♔c6 19.♖d8 there would come 19…♘f6 20.♔e2 ♖g8, when the unpinning with 21…♗e7 could not be prevented.



16…♗b4

The logical course of events in this position requires an immediate 16…h5 (e.g., 17.g5 f5 or 17…h4, with advantage to Black). Instead, Black ‘develops’ more or less mechanically, paying tribute to the false teachings of the old school, that one must first have ‘all the puppets’ in play before going over to the attack. How ridiculous and antiquated such a postulate is in our day!

17.♗d2 ♘e7 18.h4

Somewhat better seems 18.a3, with perhaps some chances of counterplay.

18…h5!

The recapture of the contested diagonal is now underway. The next eight moves involve a bitter struggle, a struggle full of tension. But after these eight moves the real battle is over, the opponent is lying prostrate, blockaded and gagged, and must await what follows with a feeling of resignation.

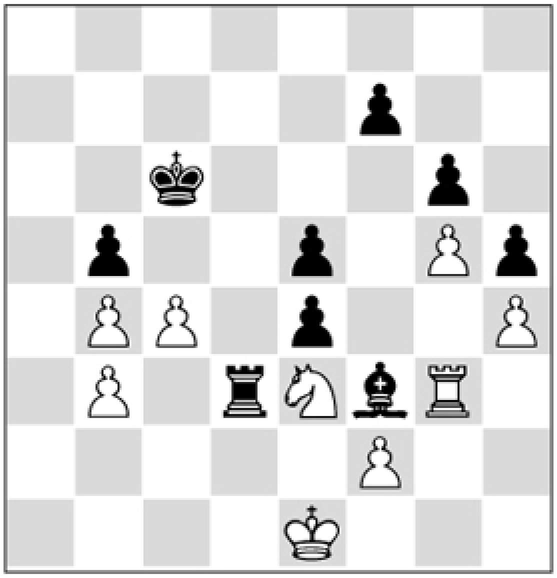
19.g5 ♘f5! 20.♘xf5 ♗xf5 21.♖g1 ♖d4

Threatening 22…e3 23.♗xe3 ♖xh4, when Black gets a passed pawn.

22.a3 ♖hd8! 23.axb4 ♖xd2 24.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 25.♘xd1 ♗g4 26.♘e3 ♗f3 27.c4

A quite hopeless position for White.

27…b5 28.b3 ♖d3 29.♖g3 g6



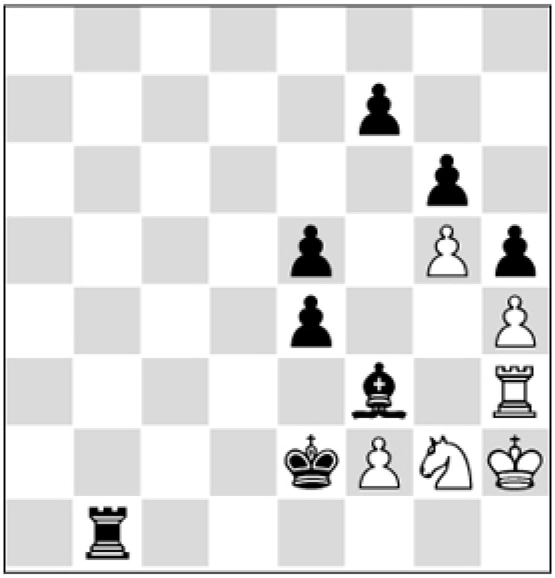
30.♜g1

The white rook is limited to the squares g3 and g1. If, to wit, 30.♖h3?, then 30…♖xb3 31.♔d2 ♖d3+ 32.♔c2 bxc4, when 33.♘xc4 is prohibited because of 33…♗d1+ and 34…♖xh3.

30…♚b7 31.cxb5

Making the win easier for Black. If 31.♖g3, the black king is first transferred to e6. Then, at a moment when the white rook stands on g3, there would follow the liquidation …♖xb3; ♔d2 bxc4; ♘xc4 ♖xb4; ♘e3. Now the black rook will occupy his opponent’s first rank. The resulting position is of course untenable for White. If nothing else, with the white rook at h3 Black could force the exchange of rooks with …♖h1, following up with …f7-f6, with an effortless win. The rest is a veritable ‘strangulation’.

31…♚b6 32.♜g3 ♚xb5 33.♜h3 ♚xb4 34.♚f1 ♜xb3 35.♚g1 ♜b2 36.♘d5+ ♚c4 37.♘e3+ ♚d3 38.♘g2 ♜b1+ 39.♚h2 ♚e2



It is amusing how the black king moves in from behind.

40.♚g3 ♜g1 41.♜h2 ♚f1 42.♚h3 ♝xg2+

0-1

Game 45

Aron Nimzowitsch
Hans Duhm
Hannover 1926 (1)

A short but edifying blockade game! The pawn configuration resembles that found in Games 41 and 42, but the *form* of the blockade, based on a diagonal, is reminiscent of Game 44. Be that as it may, the blockading net in this game is put into effect swiftly and confidently.

1.c4 e6 2.e4 c5

Better was 2…d5; e.g., 3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5 ♘f6!.

3.♞c3 ♞c6 4.f4 d6

4…♘f6!.

5.♞f3 g6 6.d4 ♝g7 7.dxc5

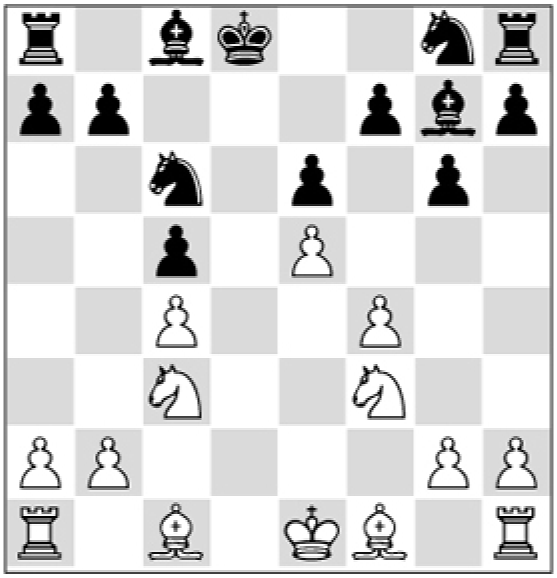
Making White’s advantage clear.

7…dxc5

If, first, 7…♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 dxc5, White trades the queens with 9.♕xd8+ and gets the advantage after 9…♔xd8 10.♘e5!. But if the knight recaptures – 9…♘xd8 – there follows 10.a4 and 11.♗e3, and if

11…b6, White has 12.a5, with comfortable play, rolling up the queenside.

8.♕xd8+ ♚xd8 9.e5



9…h5

9…f6 simply had to be played at this point, to destroy the blockading e5-pawn (which also attacks d6). But Black’s preferred plan, to post a knight on f5 and erect a sort of counter-blockade – for on f5 the knight would stem the opposing qualitative majority – is shown to be unfeasible. That is to say, a white attack undertaken at once would leave Black no more time for tempo-consuming maneuvers.

10.♗e3 b6 11.0-0-0+ ♚e7 12.♗f2!

The diagonal is now occupied with decisive effect; cf. the next note.

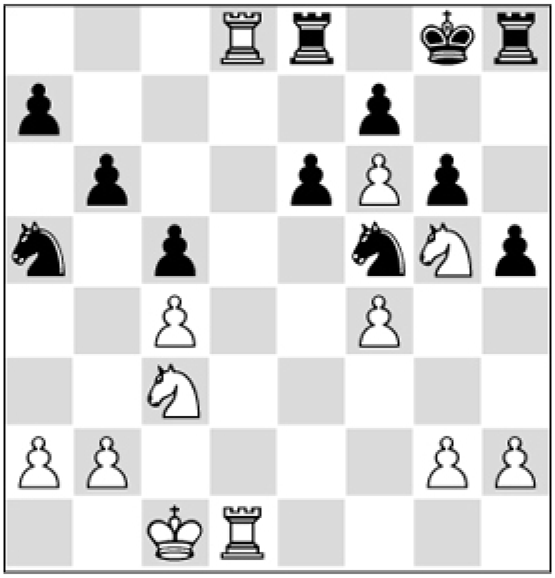
12…♘h6 13.♗h4+ ♚f8 14.♗d3 ♗b7 15.♗e4

The decisive effect that the white bishop has on the h4-d8 diagonal is due to the fact that Black is now robbed of the possibility of opposing his rook to White’s with …♖d8. He therefore has to cede the file to his opponent and so his game becomes hopeless, especially in view of his own dislocated rook at h8.

15…♘a5 16.♗xb7 ♘xb7 17.♖d7 ♖b8 18.♖hd1 ♚g8 19.♗e7!

To play ♘g5 without shutting off the bishop.

19…♘f5 20.♘g5 ♖e8 21.♗f6 ♗xf6 22.exf6 ♘a5 23.♖d8



The introduction to a mating attack.

23…♚f8 24.♜1d7 ♞h6 25.♞ce4! ♞c6 26.♜xf7+! ♞xf7 27.♞xe6+ ♚g8 28.♜xe8+ ♚h7 29.♞6g5+

and mate in two moves.

Game 46

Alfred Brinckmann
Aron Nimzowitsch
Match, Kolding 1922 (1)

This game illustrates the ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’, a stratagem that was said to have originated from my games at San Sebastian 1912 against Spielmann and Leonhardt. But it has since been established that I had already made a pawn sacrifice of a similar nature in my game vs. John at Hamburg 1910. This earlier game, which we give here in extenso, must therefore be regarded as the stem game. White: **John**; Black: **Nimzowitsch** – **1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 e6 3.e3 c5 4.b3 ♞f6 5.♝b2 ♞c6 6.♝d3 ♝d6 7.♞bd2 0-0 8.0-0 ♛e7 9.c4 b6 10.♞e5 ♝b7 11.♜c1 ♜fd8 12.♞xc6** The knight could not very well maintain itself on e5; with the text move White plays for the ‘hanging pawns’. **12…♝xc6 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♛c2** Reserving the plan involving dxc5 for a more favorable moment. **14…h6 15.♜fd1 ♜ac8 16.♝f5 ♜c7 17.♛c3 c4 18.bxc4 dxc4 19.♞xc4 ♞e4** 19…♗a4 could also be played, but it would not have been relevant to the theme of a sacrifice for the sake of blockade. **20.♕e1** (Black’s thematic play would have been seen after 20.♗xe4 ♗xe4! 21.♕d2 ♕g5 22.f4 ♕d5: *the pawn minus may be seen as compensated for by the blocking of the position*.) After the faulty text move Black won as follows: **20…♗b4 21.♕e2 ♗b5 22.♗xe4** Somewhat better, it is true, would be 22.♕f3. **22…♕xe4 23.♘d6** There is nothing better. **23…♗xe2 24.♘xe4 ♖e7 25.♘g3 ♗xd1** and Black won after a hard struggle.

After this explanatory introduction to the theme ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’, let us turn to Game 46, which throws our stratagem into sharp relief and which I accordingly number among my favorite games.

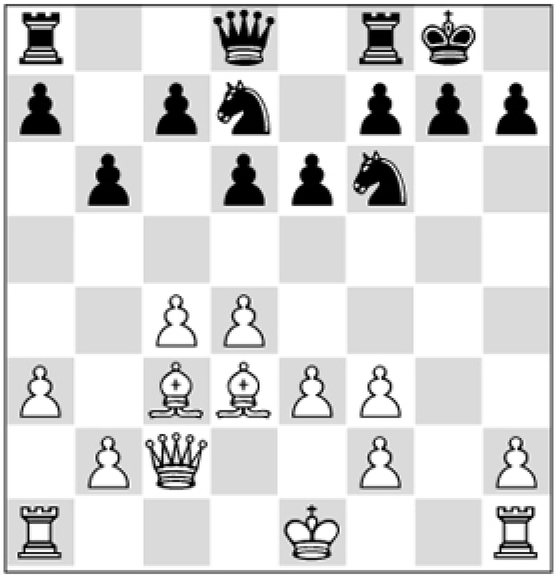
1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗d2 0-0

The immediate 4…b6 is also possible.

5.♘f3 d6 6.e3 b6 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.♕c2 ♗xf3

Black initiates a quite dangerous undertaking. There followed:

9.gxf3 ♘bd7 10.a3 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3



11…c6!

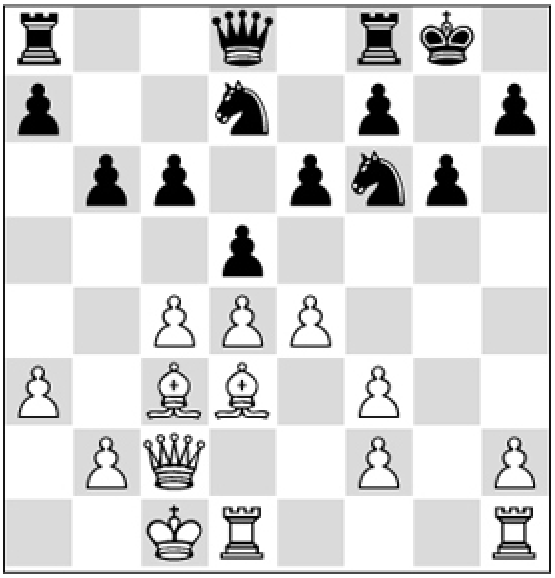
Since Black, who is trying to exploit the dynamic weakness inherent in the doubled-pawn complex, seeks at the same time to block the two bishops, he naturally avoids any premature opening of the position, e.g., the move 11…d5, when there might follow 12.cxd5 exd5 12.0-0-0 followed by ♔b1 and ♖c1. White would then have play down both the c- and g-files, while Black’s sole counter-chance, namely the …c7-c5 advance, would provoke the reply dxc5, releasing the bishops.

12.0-0-0 d5 13.e4

An advance of this sort does create attacking chances, but it also leaves weaknesses that, as we know, are not inconsiderable.

13…g6

Forced – and less bad than one might assume at first glance. The rolling-up action h2-h4-h5 is thwarted by the knight on f6.



14.cxd5

14.h4 or 14.♔b1 would have been better, but White wants to be able to play e4-e5, which, if implemented at once, would be unfavorable because of 14…dxc4 15.♗xc4 ♘d5.

14…cxd5 15.e5 ♘h5

Black now chuckles over his opponent’s crippled doubled-pawn complex.

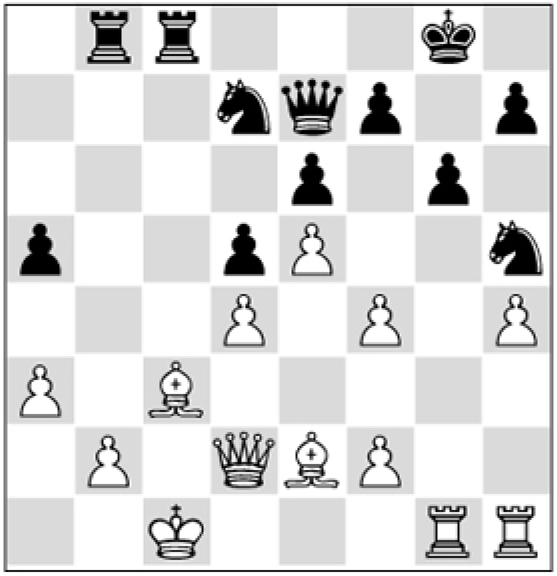
16.h4 a5

To restrain the bishop at c3. The regrouping …♕e7, …♖fc8, and …♘f8 now becomes feasible.

17.♖dg1 ♕e7 18.♕d2 ♖fc8 19.f4 b5!!

The ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’: a pawn is given up so that the king’s bishop can be traded off. After this, White becomes weak on the light squares and has to lose.

20.♗xb5 ♖ab8 21.♗e2



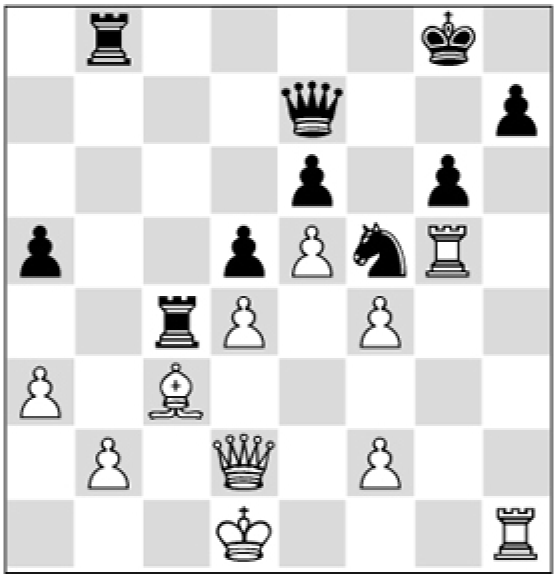
21…♘b6

A sound offer of a piece, but still more correct (and more in the style of the game) was 21…♘g7 22.h5 ♘f5 and …♘b6-c4, with the better game.

22.♔d1

Accepting by 22.♗xh5 ♘c4 23.♕c2 ♘xa3! 24.♕d2! ♘c4, with chances of a draw, was still the best course for White.

22…♘c4 23.♗xc4 ♖xc4 24.♖g5 ♘g7 25.h5 ♘f5 26.hxg6 fxg6



The position looks like that in the note to move 11 after Black solved the problem that had been posed: the doubled pawn is hopelessly blockaded and White has weaknesses over the whole board.

27.♖xf5

A desperate attempt that is vigorously turned back.

27…exf5 28.♗xa5 ♜b3! 29.♔e2 ♛b7 30.♗b4 ♛a6

White resigned, as 31.♔e1 fails to 31…♖bxb4 32.axb4 ♕a1+ 33.♕d1 ♖c1.

Game 47

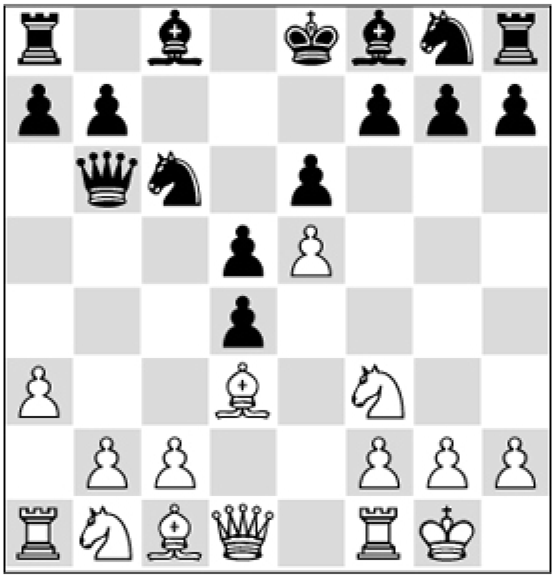
Aron Nimzowitsch
Paul Leonhardt
San Sebastian 1912 (21)

This is the stem game of the strategy ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’ (cf., however, the introductory note to Game 46).

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♛b6

On 4…cxd4 there could follow 5.♗d3 in gambit style, or 5.♕xd4 ♘c6 6.♕f4 with solid and sound pressure.

5.♗d3 cxd4 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.a3



With this move we have reached a position typical of our stratagem: the, in a certain sense, valuable and attractive e5-pawn would seem to be full compensation for the negligible sacrifice. However, the e5-pawn seems valuable because it assists in restraining Black’s position.

7…♞ge7

After the game my opponent very much wanted to know what I would have played after 7…a5. In reply, I gave the variation 8.♗f4 ♕xb2 9.♘bd2. ‘You would never seriously have dared to play this’, said Leonhardt. But I would have done: this second ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’ logically follows closely on the first. Whether, after 7…a5 8.♗f4 ♕xb2 9.♘bd2 ♕b6 (on 9…♗xa3 White could already force a draw with 10.♘b3 followed by ♗c1 and ♗d2) 10.♖e1!, White would have sufficient compensation is not easy to determine. In any event, Black’s extra pawns would lack mobility and his development would be fraught with difficulties.

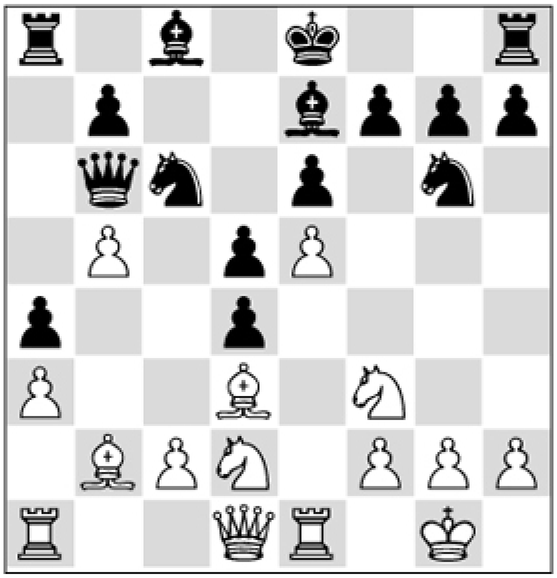
In addition to the move 8.♗f4, etc., which is based on my novel strategy, 8.a4 can also be considered; e.g., 8…♗c5 9.♘a3, with chances and counter-chances.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Lasker, in a similar position, chose 7…f5, when we recommend 8.b4 a6 9.c4! dxc3 10.♘xc3, when White is threatening to occupy the b6-square with ♗e3 and ♘a4.

8.b4 ♞g6 9.♖e1 ♝e7 10.♝b2 a5

Somewhat better was 10…a6.

11.b5 a4 12.♘bd2



Threatening 13.bxc6 ♕xb2 14.♖b1 and 15.cxb7.

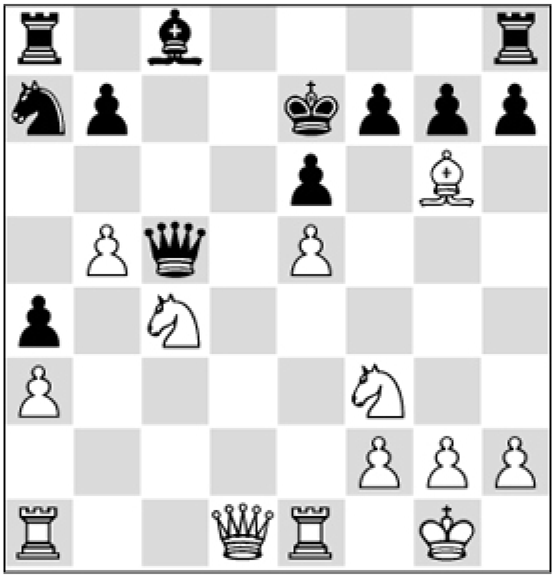
12…♘a7 13.♗xd4 ♗c5 14.♗xc5!

The a4-pawn could have been won by 14.c3.

14…♕xc5 15.c4 dxc4 16.♘e4 ♕d5 17.♘d6+ ♚e7 18.♘xc4 ♕c5

Preventing 19.♘b6.

19.♗xg6!



19…hxg6

Or 19…♕xc4 20.♕d6+ ♔e8 21.♖ad1 fxg6 22.♕d8+ and 23.♘g5#.

20.♕d6+ ♕xd6 21.exd6+

Black resigned, for if 21…♔e8 there follows 22.♘b6 ♖b8 23.♘e5 and there is no parry to the threat 24.d7+.

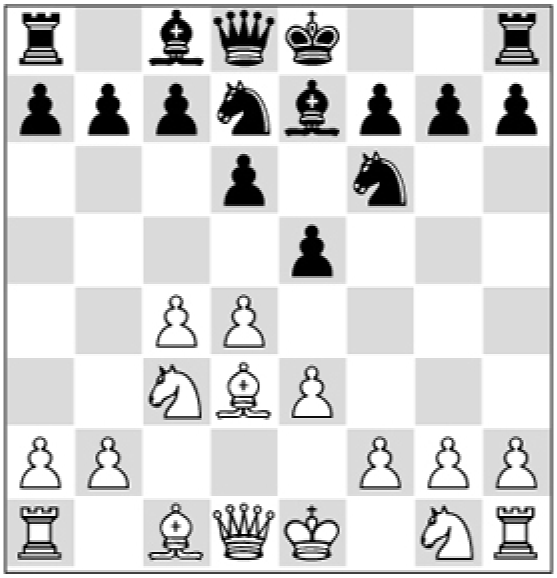
Game 48

Aron Nimzowitsch
Carl Ahues
Bad Niendorf 1927

The sacrifice made here on move 25 is only seemingly a ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’. In reality it is an instance of a diversionary attack – the blockade was already in place *beforehand*. But since everything must have its name, we should characterize this encounter as a blockade game crowned by a sacrifice.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d6 3.d4 ♘bd7 4.e3 e5 5.♗d3 ♗e7

All this has been played before. Now, at this point, White usually continues with ♘ge2, 0-0, and f2-f4, which without question is a sound strategy. But the player of the white pieces is seeking to put in place a sharper method of development.



6.f4 0-0 7.♘f3 exd4! 8.exd4 d5

Black has defended well and has an approximately level game.

9.c5! c6!

Now there is the ever-present threat of rolling up with …b7-b6.

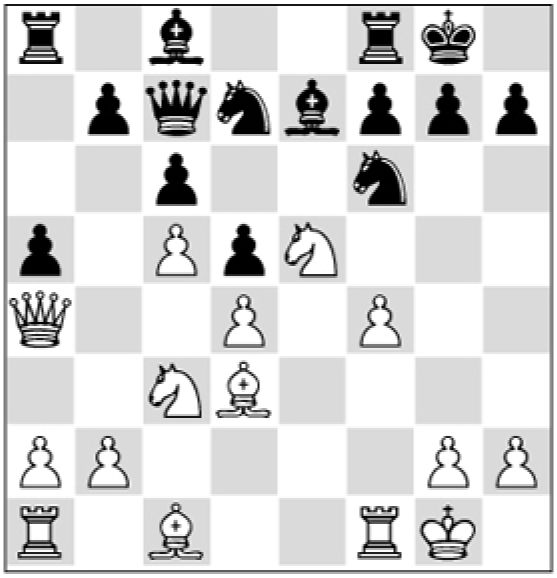
10.0-0

Renouncing 10.a3 because of 10…b6 11.b4 bxc5 12.bxc5 ♘xc5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5!, with a strong attack.

10…a5

There was no reason to hold back on the freeing move 10…b6!; e.g., 11.♘e5 ♕c7 12.cxb6 (best) 12…axb6 13.♗d2 and ♖c1 to follow, with about equal chances. After the text move Black finds himself at a disadvantage.

11.♘e5 ♕c7 12.♕a4



Making …b7-b5 difficult, if not altogether impossible.

During the game, I must admit I was under the impression that 12…b5, supported by combinative subtleties, was in fact possible – e.g., 13.cxb6 ♕xb6 14.♘xc6 ♗d6 – and this impression was so strong that even later I was unable to free myself from it. In *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten*, for instance, I recommended, in reply to 12…b5, 13.♕c2, when my opponent’s plan to occupy e4 would then founder: 13…b4 14.♘a4 ♗a6 15.♗xa6 ♖xa6 (now threatening 16…♘e4) 16.♕e2!, winning because of the indirect threat to the bishop on e7.

But today I cannot see why the pawn offer should not have been accepted: after 12…b5 13.cxb6 ♕xb6 14.♘xc6 ♗d6 White would have been able to play the simple 15.♔h1 and 16.♘e5, when Black would not have had any sort of compensation.

12…♜e8 13.♚h1 ♞f8

Again in *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* I tried to parry 13…b5 (instead of the text move) in the most complicated way instead of going into the variation previously indicated; for example: 13…b5 14.cxb6 ♕xb6 15.♘xc6 (in *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* I gave only 15.♕xc6) 15…♗b7 (or 15…♗d6 16.♘e5) 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.fxe5 ♘e4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♗c4 ♖f8 20.♕b3, etc.
So it would seem to be shown that with his 10th move Black committed a sin of omission that could not be made good later.

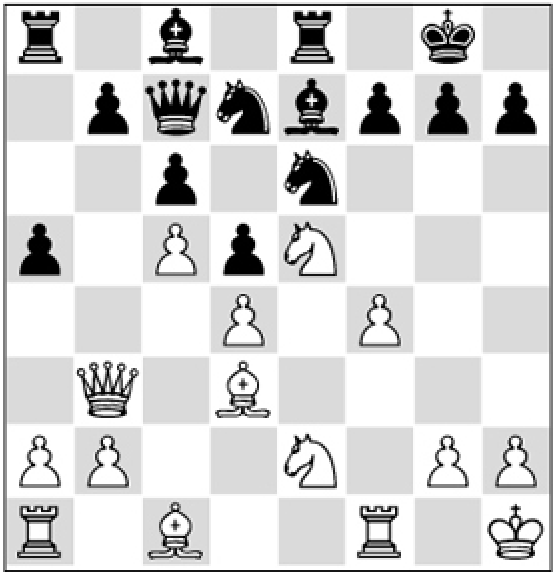
14.♛b3

Now the moves …b7-b6 and …b7-b5 are to be prevented definitively.

14…♞e6!

Very good! 15.♗e3 is to be answered by 15…♗xc5!.

15.♞e2 ♞d7



Black has succeeded in dissuading the enemy knight from its route to b6 by way of c3 and a4, but this success is purchased (as will soon be seen) at the high cost of the unfavorable placement of the knight on e6.

Now Black is going to be ‘narrowed down’.

16.♞xd7 ♝xd7

Here I would have taken back with the queen, for in that case the bishop could have come to f6 (whatever White chooses to do), which after the text is no longer the case.

17.f5 ♞f8 18.♝f4 ♛c8 19.♝e5! f6

Compare the previous note.

20.♝g3 a4 21.♛b4!

The only move to prevent the blockading ring from being blown apart; e.g., 21.♕c3 b6! 22.cxb6 ♗d8, followed possibly by …♕b7, etc.

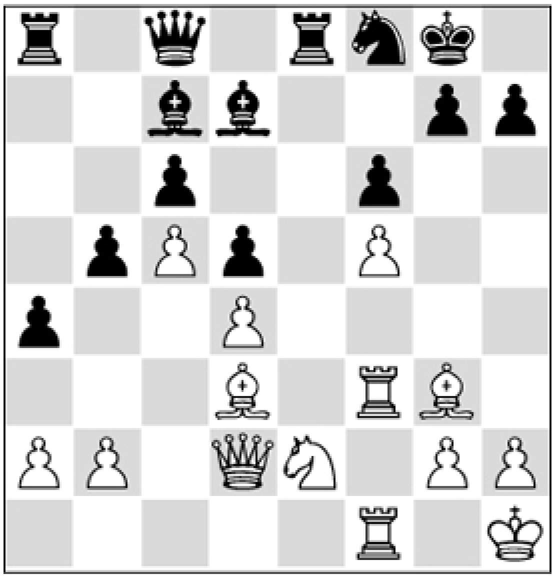
21…b5 22.♛d2

Now White has a free hand on the kingside; on the other side of the board everything is bolted tight.

22…♝d8

Here, 22…♖d8 could very well have been considered, to bring the bishop to f7 as quickly as possible.

23.♜f3 ♝c7 24.♜af1



24…♜e7

Making possible an interesting sally on the part of his opponent. Somewhat better therefore seems 24…♗xg3; e.g., 25.♘xg3 ♕c7

26.♘h5 ♖e7 27.g4 h6 28.h4 ♘h7. But in this case too White would be ready for an assault after 29.♘f4 and 30.♘h3.

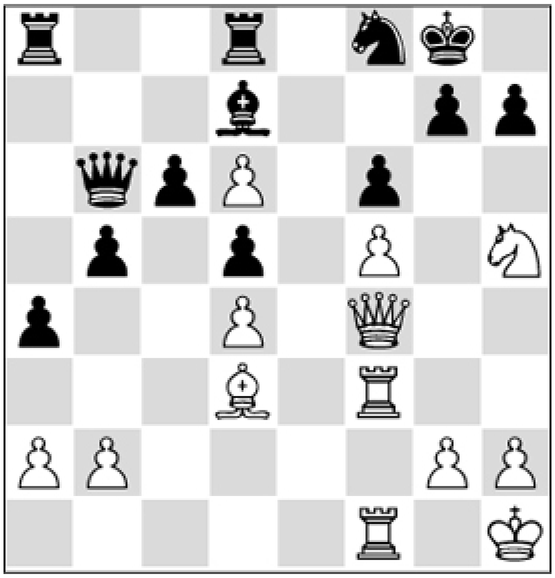
25.♝d6!!

A deeply calculated pawn sacrifice! The pawn that ends up on d6 will of course be doomed, but while Black is preparing to consume it his kingside will be blown open by a knight sacrifice on f6.

25…♝xd6 26.cxd6 ♜e8 27.♞g3 ♛d8 28.♛c1!

Again a quiet move, by which 28…♗c8? is prevented (29.♕xc6).

28…♛b6 29.♛f4 ♜ed8 30.♞h5



30…♜a7

For if 30…♗e8, 31.♘xf6+ would follow, shattering Black’s game: 31…gxf6 32.♖g3+ ♔(any) 33.♕h6 and wins.

31.♞xf6+

Black resigned.

On 31…♔h8! I had planned 32.♘xh7!, which I demonstrated right after the conclusion of the game: 32…♘xh7 33.♕h4 ♔g8 34.f6 ♘xf6 35.♖xf6, etc., or 32…♔xh7 33.f6+ g6 34.♕h4+ ♔g8 35.f7+ ♔g7 36.♕f6+ ♔h7 37.♖f4, etc. Weaker after 31…♔h8 would be the continuation 32.♕h4, as there would follow 32…h6; e.g., 33.♘g4 ♘h7 34.f6 ♗xg4, when a further ‘effort’ has to be made, namely, 35.♕xg4! ♘xf6 36.♕g6 and White’s attack should cut through.

6. My new treatment of the problem of the pawn chain – the Dresden Variation

In Games 49 through 51 I refrain from an early challenge to the enemy pawn chain in order to substitute for the attacking values thus lost positional play on the light squares. That is, I trade off the f1-bishop and proceed to operate on the now-weakened light squares. The logical prerequisite for success in this strategy is, however, the safeguarding of my own king position, and herein lies the principal difficulty of this entire way of playing.

Let us consider any kind of pawn chain, say the chain that occurs after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5. Black can hem in his opponent’s otherwise mobile kingside pawns with …h7-h5 and …g7-g6. In this scheme, however, the squares g5, f6, etc., would become weak (see Game 50). And compare the following opening sequence from **Steiner-Nimzowitsch**, Berlin 1928: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5** A challenge that, as will soon be seen, is not meant to be serious, as the pawn soon continues happily on its way. **5.♗d2 ♘e7 6.a3 ♗xc3 7.bxc3 c4? 8.h4 h5 9.♗e2! ♘f5 10.g3! g6 11.♗g5 ♕a5 12.♕d2** The dark-square bishop diagonal has a stifling effect, while the counter-blockade with …♘f5 is soon shown to be untenable. **12…♘c6 13.♗f6 ♖g8 14.♘h3 ♔d7 15.♘g5 ♘h6 16.f3 ♔c7 17.g4 ♖e8 18.♗g7 ♘g8** and Black is completely thrown back. After **19.gxh5 gxh5 20.f4**, my position could no longer be held.

The moral of the story? Well, Black’s dark-squared bishop should only be given up for its white counterpart, otherwise the bishop at c1 becomes a dominant force (Game 50). Further, it is advisable if possible to protect the h5-pawn without resorting to …g7-g6. See Game 51. Compare this also with Game 13.

We illustrate the Dresden Variation in Game 52. The idea here is a permanent stabilization of the center.

Game 49

Arpad Vajda
Aron Nimzowitsch
Kecskemet 1927 (6)

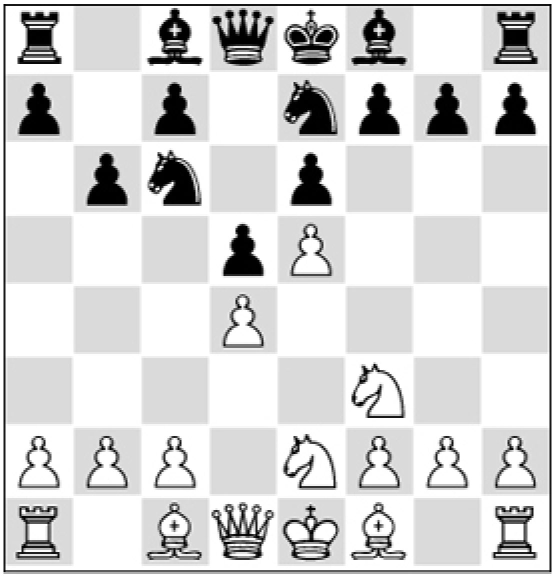
1.e4 ♞c6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 e6 4.e5 ♞ge7!

Not 4…♗b4 because of 5.♕g4.

5.♞f3

Now if 5.♕g4, 5…h5 would follow.

5…b6 6.♞e2



‘Both men soliloquized in turn, believing they were carrying on a dialogue’, a somewhat melancholic-tempered author once said. This idea of people talking past one another applies here as well: the second player is looking to take over the light squares, while the first player for his part aims for the occupation of the dark squares. He is planning ♘g3-h5, with pressure against g7 and f6 – and the only connection between the two contestants is the fact that they move one after the other.

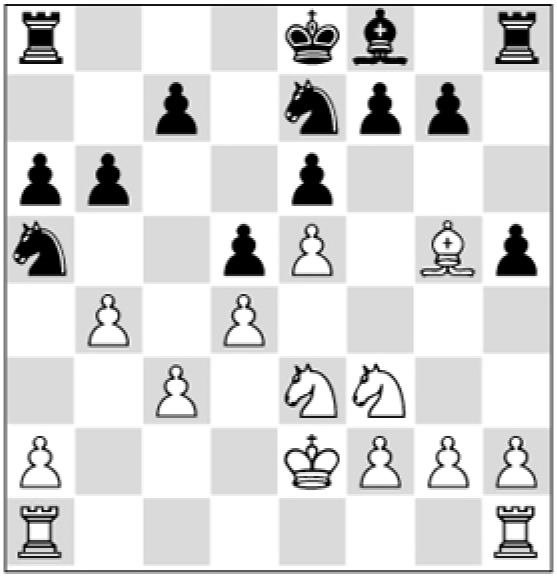
6…♝a6 7.c3

The immediate 7.♘g3 was worth considering; e.g., 7…♗xf1 8.♔xf1 h5 (else 9.♘xh5) 9.h4, with ♘g5 to follow.

7…♛d7 8.♞g3 ♝xf1 9.♞xf1 h5 10.♝g5 ♞a5

The ‘play’ against the ‘white’ points at b5, c4, and f5 now becomes apparent.

11.♛e2 a6! 12.♞e3 ♛b5 13.b4 ♛xe2+ 14.♚xe2



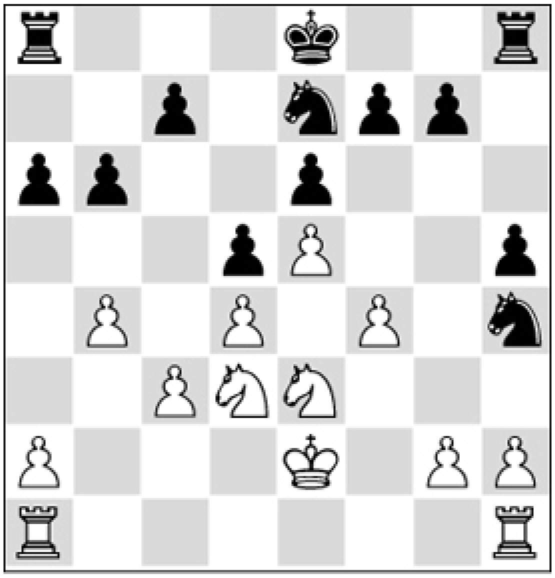
14…♘ac6

Bad is 14…♘c4 because of 15.♘xc4 dxc4 16.♗xe7 ♗xe7 17.♘d2, and if 17…b5, then 18.a4. Also poor is 14…♘b7, as …c7-c5 would only be good for White: 15.♘e1 c5? 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.♖b1, etc.

15.♘e1 ♘g6 16.♘d3 ♗e7

The end of the monologues; the bloody dialogue can now commence!

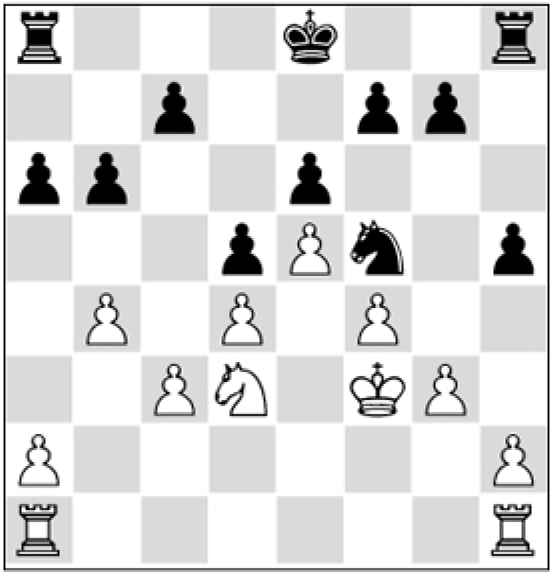
17.♗xe7 ♘cxe7 18.f4 ♘h4!



Securing the f5-square. Had White prevented this on the previous move with 18.g3, there would have followed 18… ♘f8!, followed by …

♘d7, …0-0, …♖fc8, and finally …c7-c5 with abundant play for Black.

19.g3 ♞hf5 20.♞xf5 ♞xf5 21.♚f3



Planning an assault on the knight at f5, that is, with h2-h3, g3-g4, etc. How can this attack be thwarted?

21…a5

At the right moment.

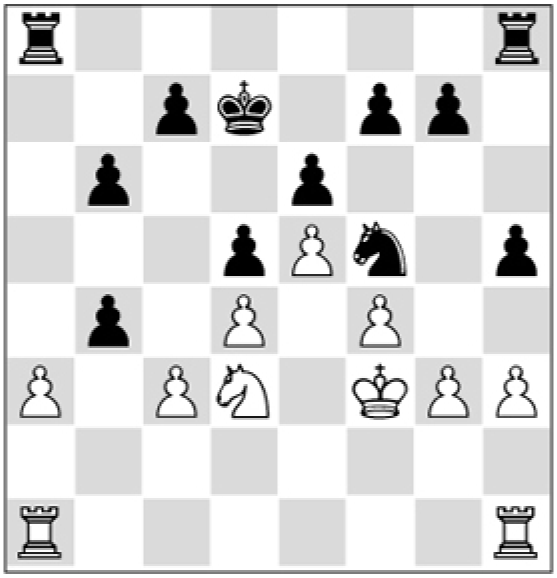
22.a3

White does not go in for 22.b5 c6 23.bxc6 ♖c8, as the pressure down the c-file would indeed have become troublesome – against which White's b-file would not have been an equivalent.

22…♚d7 23.h3

Overlooking his opponent's combination. He might have considered 23.♖hb1 and then ♘e1-c2-e3. But Black would be somewhat better placed even in that case.

23…axb4



24.♞xb4

A bitter necessity! If 24.axb4 there would follow 24…h4 25.g4 ♘g3 26.♖hc1 ♘e4, either winning the c-pawn or taking over the a-file.

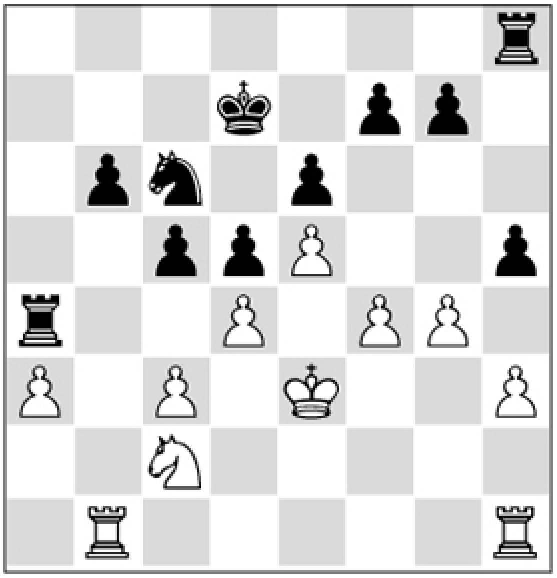
24…♜a4

Here too the maneuver just indicated was worthy of strong consideration. But the text move should also be good enough.

25.g4 ♞e7 26.♚e3! c5

Black is not content with the line 26… hxg4 27.hxg4 ♖xh1 28.♖xh1 ♖xa3, which would concede the h-file to his opponent.

27.♞c2 ♞c6 28.♜ab1



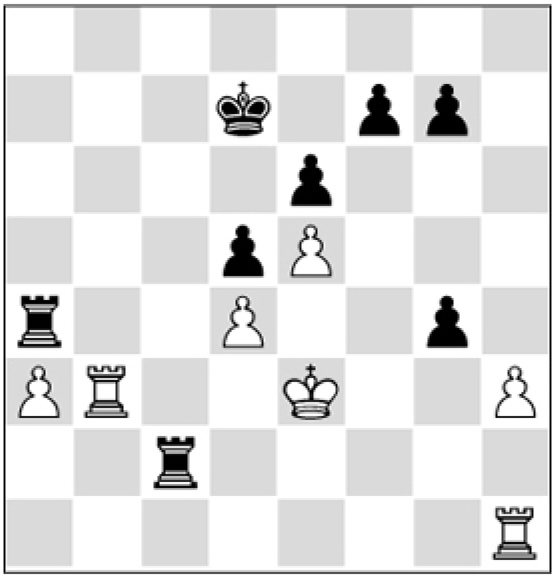
28…♖c8

Winning easily at this juncture was 28…cxd4+ 29.cxd4 (29.♘xd4? ♖xa3) 29…♖c4 30.♔d3 ♖hc8 31.♖xb6 ♘xe5+ 32.fxe5 ♖c3+ 33.♔d2 ♖xc2+ 34.♔e3 g5. The second player was in time pressure here.

29.♖xb6 cxd4+ 30.cxd4 ♘xe5 31.fxe5 ♖xc2 32.♖b3

Black’s advantage has just about evaporated.

32…hxg4



33.hxg4

Here White had a most piquant drawing combination at his disposal, namely 33.♖f1 ♖h2 34.♖xf7+ ♔e8 35.♖bb7! (which looks like a serious blunder!) 35…♖xa3+ 36.♔f4 ♖f2+ 37.♔xg4 ♖xf7; now it is White's turn, and he plays 38.♖b8+, with a draw!

33…♜g2 34.♜b7+

34.♔f3 would have drawn; e.g., 34… ♖a2 35.♖h7, or 34…♖d2 35.♖h7, etc.

34…♚c6 35.♜hb1 ♜xa3+ 36.♚f4 ♜a6 37.♚g5

Or 37.♔f3 ♖g1.

37…f6+

Not 37…f5 because of 38.♖xg7 ♖xg4+ 39.♔f6, etc.

38.exf6 gxf6+ 39.♚xf6 ♜xg4 40.♜e7

Other moves also would have been of little use, since White's king is too poorly placed for the endgame, and his forces are not sufficient for a mating attack.

40…♜f4+ 41.♚xe6 ♜xd4 42.♚f5 ♜aa4 43.♜e6+ ♚c5 44.♚f6 ♜f4+ 45.♚e7 ♜a7+ 46.♚e8 ♜e4

White resigned.

In spite of the omission on the 28th move we consider this game to be a significant strategical achievement. Who would have dared to defer until the 26th move the advance …c7-c5, the only saving clause for Black – without which, e.g., Dr. Tarrasch could not imagine any sort of fight at all or any resistance of any kind against the enemy pawn chain! Truly, this game has pointed the way to a new land.

Game 50

Hans Kmoch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Bad Niendorf 1927

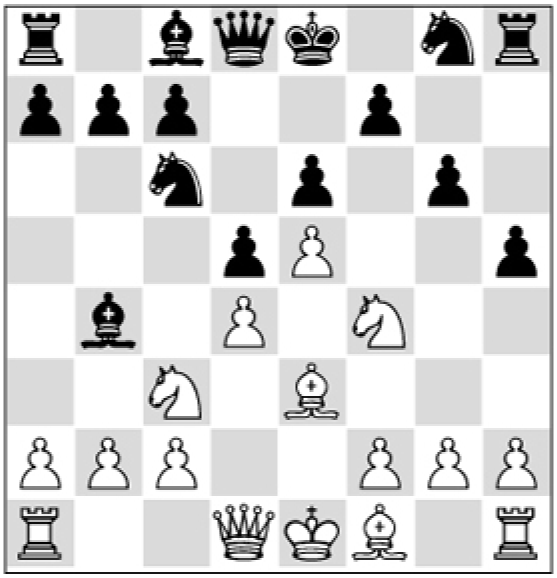
1.e4 ♞c6 2.♞c3 e6 3.d4 ♝b4

Safer is 3…d5.

4.♞e2 d5 5.e5 h5

Black selects our preventive formation …h7-h5. But better would be 5…♘ge7; e.g., 6.♘f4 ♘g6 7.♘h5 ♖g8, then …♗e7 and preparations to castle queenside.

6.♘f4! g6 7.♗e3



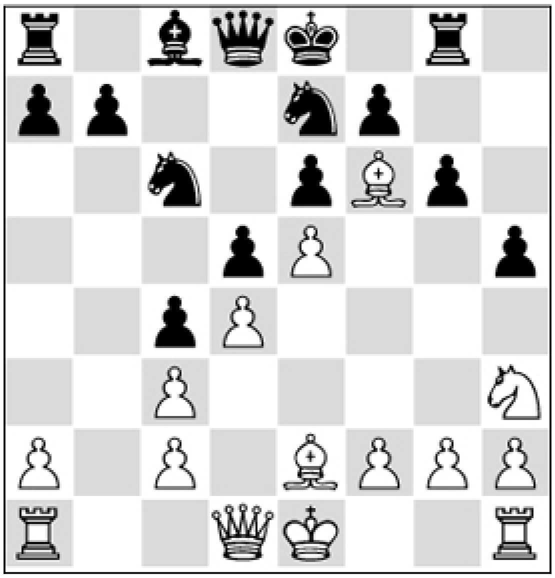
7…♗xc3+?

Very riskily played, for the weakness of White’s doubled-pawn complex is more than compensated for by his possession of the g5-d8 diagonal. Correct was 7… ♘ge7 or even 7…♗f8!.

8.bxc3 ♘a5 9.♗d3 ♘e7 10.♘h3! c5 11.♗g5 c4 12.♗e2 ♘ac6 13.♗f6

White should now be able to win rather easily. Compare the Steiner game in the preliminary discussion.

13…♖g8



14.0-0

Feeble. Correct was 14.♘g5 followed by f2-f3 and g2-g4 or 14.♘g5 and 15.g4 (after 15…hxg4 16.♗xg4, h2-h4-h5 is decisive).

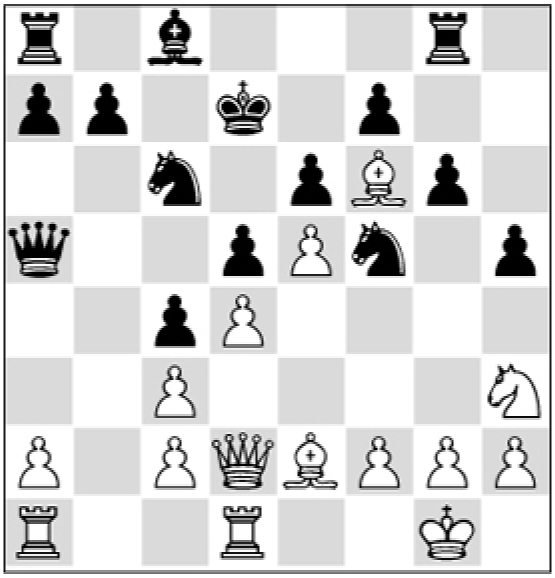
14…♛a5

A slim counter-chance.

15.♛d2 ♞f5 16.♜fd1

More economical employment of the rooks could be achieved here with 16.♖ad1 (the a-pawn would of course be taboo).

16…♚d7!



A difficult decision: the king abandons the f-pawn to its fate. And yet this line of play would seem to be justified, corresponding as it does to the stratagem outlined in Games 29 and 30, ‘flight of the king as a palliative measure’.

17.♞g5 ♜f8

It is open to question whether the insouciant 17…♔c7 might not have been more in the spirit of said stratagem. It is not a matter of the f-pawn as such but of preventing White, after ♘xf7, from making the f7-square a base of operations in support of further attacks: the continued flight of the king would have counter-acted such endeavors on the part of White. For instance, 17… ♔c7 18.♘xf7 ♗d7 19.f3 ♖af8 20.♘g5 and now either 20…♘g7, followed by …♘e8, or 20…♔b8 with a waiting policy, when a win by White would seem doubtful.

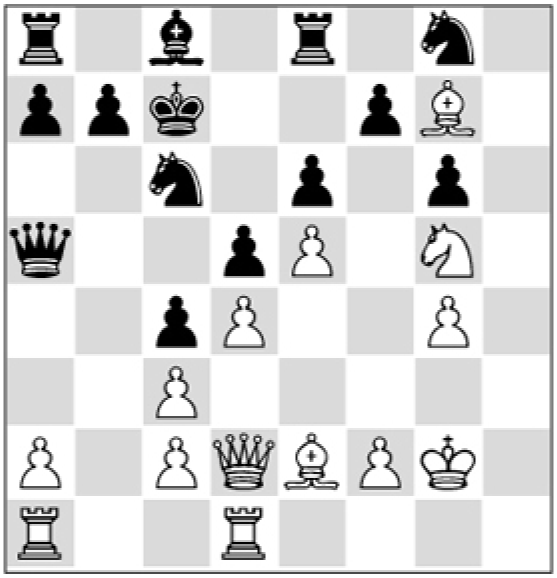
18.h3?

The wrong method; 18.f3 would have been correct.

18…♚c7 19.g4 hxg4 20.hxg4 ♞fe7 21.♚g2 ♞g8

A bad mistake, but his opponent fails to take advantage of it. With 21…♗d7 22.♖h1 ♖ae8 23.♖h7 ♘d8 Black could instead have curled up like a hedgehog.

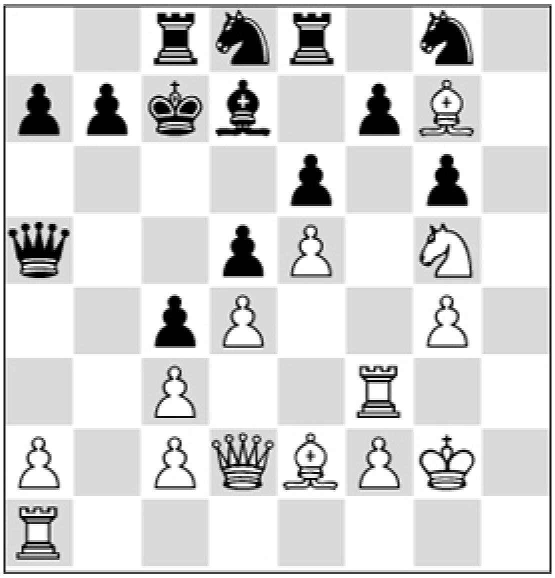
22.♝g7 ♜e8



23.♜h1?

23.♘xf7! would not only have won the pawn but also the important d6-square. If in response 23…♖e7, then 24.♘d6 ♗d7 (24…♖xg7? 25.♘e8+ ♔d8 26.♘xg7 ♕c7 27.♕g5+) 25.♗h6, when White would be well placed.

23…♝d7 24.♜h3 ♞d8 25.♜f3 ♜c8



26.♜h1?

An ill-motivated sacrifice of a pawn, for it soon becomes apparent that the planned doubling of the rooks will strike at nothing. To be considered was 26.♘xf7 or 26.♕c1 followed by ♕b2. On 26.♘xf7 there would follow 26…♘xf7 27.♖xf7 ♖e7 28.♖xe7 ♘xe7. If 26.♕c1, on the other hand, 26…♔b8 would follow; e.g., 27.♕b2 ♖c6! 28.♕b4! ♕c7 29.♗f8! ♖b6? 30.♗d6. From what we have just said, two points can be made: first, the correctness of the prophylactic method 26.♕c1 and 27.♕b2; second, the inherent affinity between White’s minor pieces and the d6-square. Unconcerned with man’s often muddled plans, the pieces develop a logic of their own that in most cases, as here, is both aesthetic and compelling.

26…♛xa2

Black can of course be most satisfied with this outcome of his rather threadbare counter-attack.

27.♜h7 ♚b8 28.♞xf7 ♞xf7 29.♜xf7 ♝c6

Now the doubled rooks are virtually out of play.

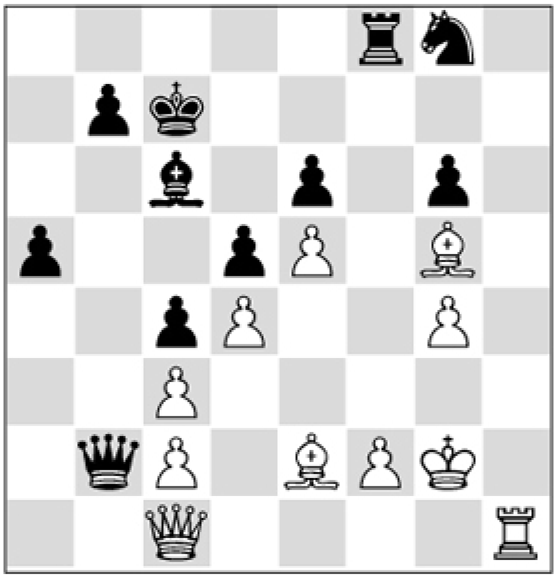
30.♝f6 a5

Preference should have been given to 30…♕b2, to anticipate the preventive move 31.♕c1. But White is not thinking about preventive maneuvers.

31.♜h1 ♛b2 32.♝g5 ♜f8 33.♜fh7 ♜c7 34.♜xc7

Or 34.♖7h3 ♖cf7.

34…♚xc7 35.♛c1!



As indifferently as White has played to this point ‘for the win’, he now has an admirable appreciation of his slender drawing chances. The ensuing attempts to save himself are of the highest class – one cannot help but think of Schlechter.

35…♛xc3 36.♛a1! ♛xa1 37.♜xa1 ♜a8 38.♝d2 b6 39.♚g3

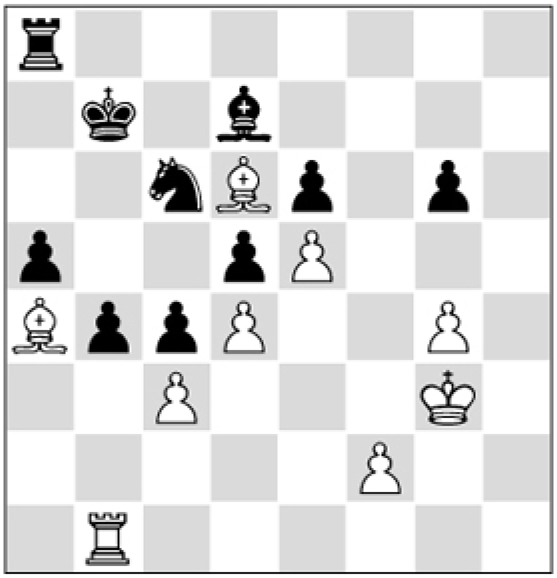
Threatening a king march to g5.

39…♞e7 40.♝d1 ♝d7

If Black is to win at all, he can do so only with 40…♗b7, for now:

41.♝b4! ♞c6 42.♝d6+ ♚b7 43.c3 b5 44.♜b1 b4 45.♝a4!

Not 45.cxb4 axb4 46.♗xb4 ♘xd4 47.♗c5+ ♘b5, etc.



45…b3

This looks good, but it allows the position to become blocked. The alternative, however, is decidedly double-edged: 45…♘xd4 46.♗xd7 ♘e2+ 47.♔f3 ♘xc3 48.♗xe6 ♔c6, etc.

46.♝xc6+ ♚xc6 47.g5!

Denying the bishop an outlet via g6.

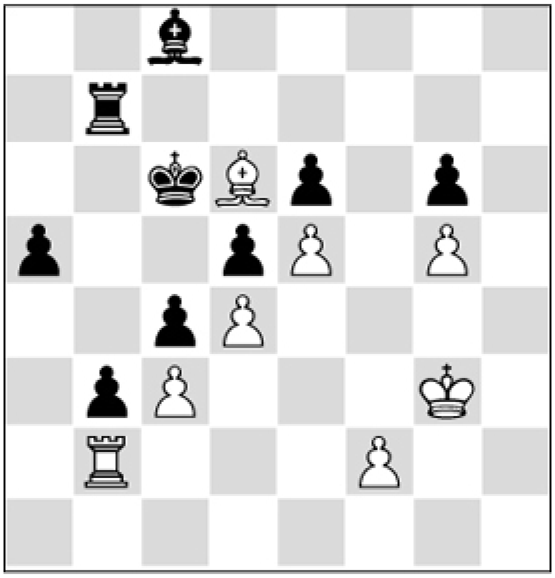
47…♜a7 48.♜b2 ♜b7 49.♚f4

Allowing his opponent to break through in a manner reminiscent of a study. 49.♗a3 would have drawn.

49…♝c8

Threatening 50..♖h7.

50.♚g3



50…♖b4!!

The winning move.

51.cxb4

Mandatory, otherwise 51…♖a4, etc.

51…a4 52.b5+ ♔xb5 53.♗a3 c3 54.♖b1 ♔c4

As White’s bishop and rook are immobilized – for otherwise …b3-b2 and …♔b3 decide at once – the king can calmly dine on the d4-pawn, then return to c4. This fact is decisive. There followed:

55.f4 ♔xd4 56.♔f2 ♔c4 57.♔e1 d4 58.♔e2 ♔d5 59.♔f3

59.♔d3? ♗a6#!.

59…♗b7 60.♖e1 ♔c4+ 61.♔f2 b2 62.f5 exf5 63.e6 ♗c6

White resigned.

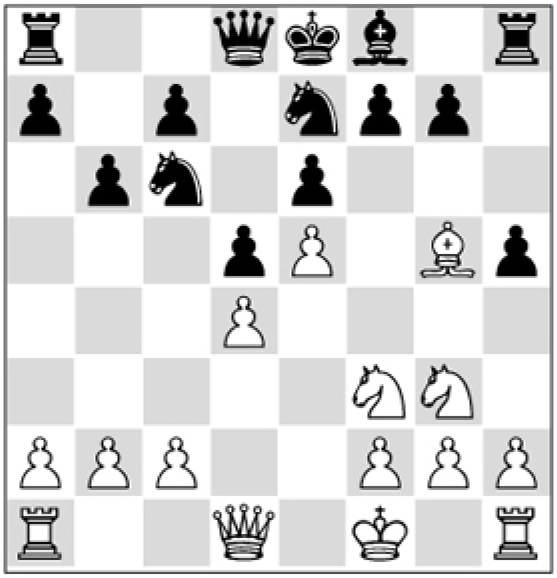
Game 51

Alfred Brinckmann
Aron Nimzowitsch
Bad Niendorf 1927

1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘c3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.e5 ♘ge7 5.♘f3 b6! 6.♘e2! ♗a6

We have already discussed these moves in the notes to Game 49.

7.♘g3 ♗xf1 8.♔xf1 h5 9.♗g5

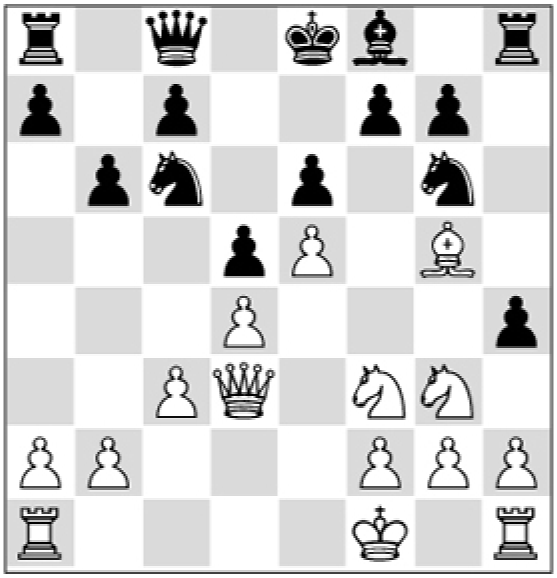


Now White threatens to seize the dark squares, as follows: 10.♘h4 g6 11.♗f6 and ♘g5, etc. How can the h5-pawn be guarded without the help of the weakening …g7-g6?

9…♕c8!

If now 10.♘h4, then 10…♕a6+ 11.♔g1 ♕a4!! 12.c3 ♕xd1+, when h5 is sufficiently protected without recourse to …g7-g6.

10.♕d3 ♘g6 11.c3 h4



This move, in and of itself rather loosening (by which I mean self-weakening), is meant as a preventive action against the intended h2-h4.

For instance, 11…♗e7 (instead of 11…h4) 12.h4. Still, the plan with 11…♗e7 also seems completely playable.

12.♞e2 ♝e7

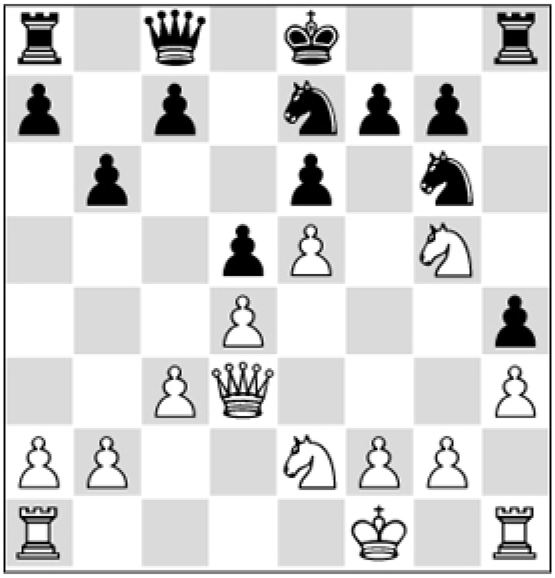
12…h3 could have been seriously considered; e.g., 13.gxh3 ♗e7, or 13.g3 a5 and …♕a6.

13.h3 ♝xg5

Possible here was 13…♖h5.

14.♞xg5 ♞ce7

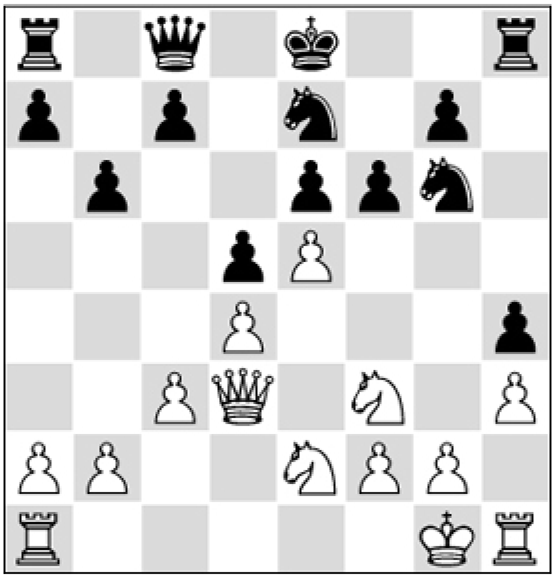
Here, too, 14…♖h5 had to be considered.



15.♚g1

This gives his opponent time for a comprehensive attack in the center. Brinckmann therefore claims that the counter-attack 15.♕f3 was indicated. But even in that case Black's position would have been decidedly preferable after 15…♘f5 16.g4 hxg3 17.fxg3 (or 17.♘xg3 ♘gh4) 17…♕d7 18.h4 0-0-0 19.h5 ♘ge7 20.g4 ♘h6.

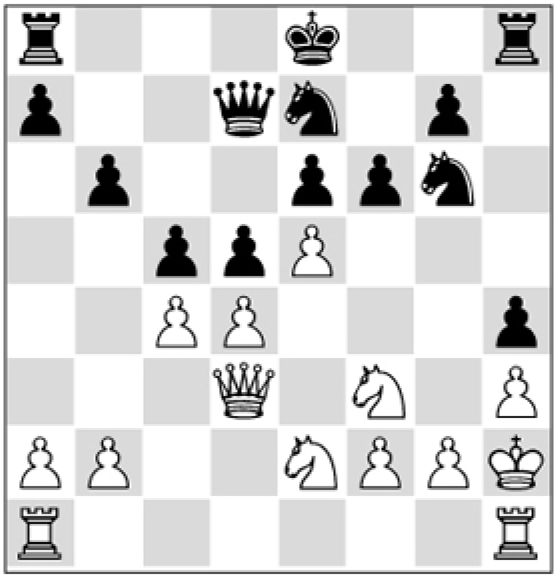
15…f6 16.♞f3



16…♕d7

After this move White has an opportunity (which, however, he lets pass) to save the game with a most cunning maneuver. The immediate 16…c5, followed perhaps by …♕c7, would therefore be rather more suitable for maintaining Black's advantage.

17.♔h2 c5 18.c4!

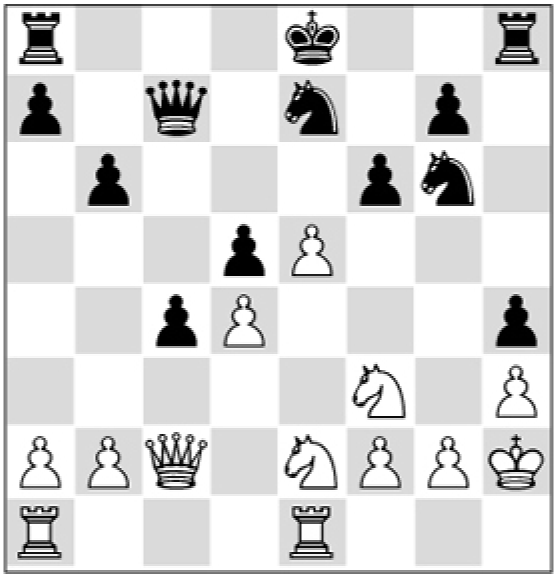


Bold and ingenious; it's too bad White did not find the right continuation at move 24 – which, to be sure, lay deeply hidden in the position.

18…♛c7 19.cxd5 c4

If 19…fxe5?, there would follow 20.♕b5+ ♔f8 21.♘g5 exd4+ 22.f4 ♘xf4 23.♖hf1 ♘xd5 24.♘xe6+ and wins.

20.♛c2 exd5 21.♜he1



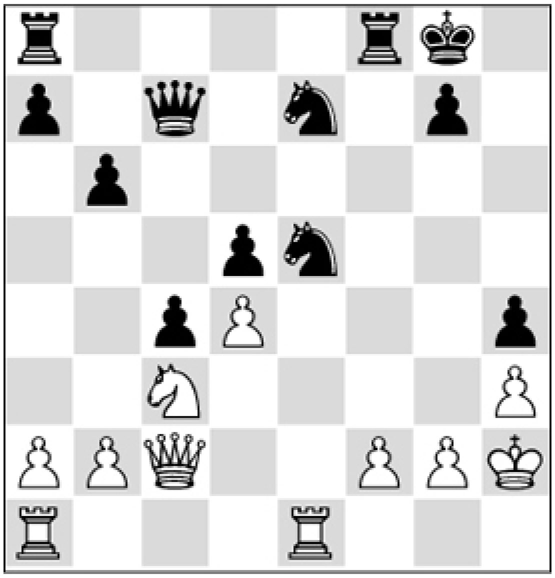
21…0-0

I did not care to get involved in 21…fxe5 22.dxe5 ♘xe5 23.♘xe5 ♕xe5+ 24.f4 ♕d6, when White now plays, say, 25.♖ad1, threatening 26.♕xc4.

22.♞c3 fxe5 23.♞xe5

Not 23.dxe5 because of 23…♖xf3 followed by …♘xe5, with a decisive attack.

23…♞xe5



24.dxe5?

Correct was 24.♖xe5!!; e.g., 24…♘c6 25.♘xd5 ♕d6 26.♕xc4 ♘xe5 27.dxe5 ♕xe5+ 28.f4 ♕e6 29.f5 ♕e5+ 30.♔h1 ♖f7, and now 31.♖d1, when Black would be unable to strengthen his position further – hence a draw.

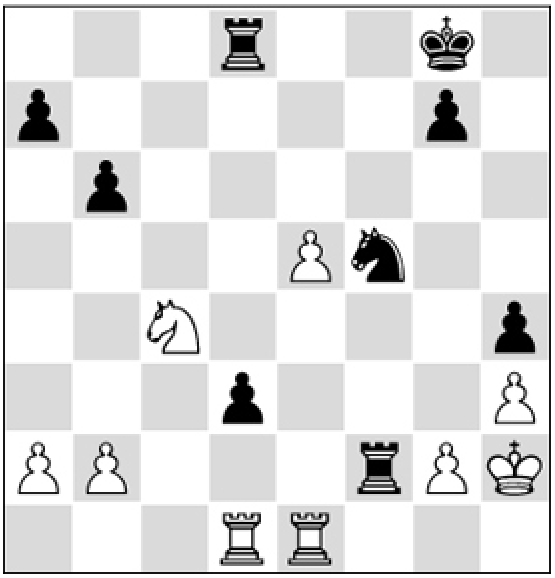
24…d4! 25.♞b5 ♛c5 26.♞d6 d3

Not 26…b5 because of 27.♕e4, with centralization.

27.♛xc4+ ♛xc4 28.♞xc4 ♜xf2

The following is a textbook example of play on the 7th and 8th ranks (here, the 1st and 2nd ranks).

29.♜ad1 ♜c8 30.♞e3 ♜d8 31.♞c4 ♞f5



Preventing 32.♘d6.

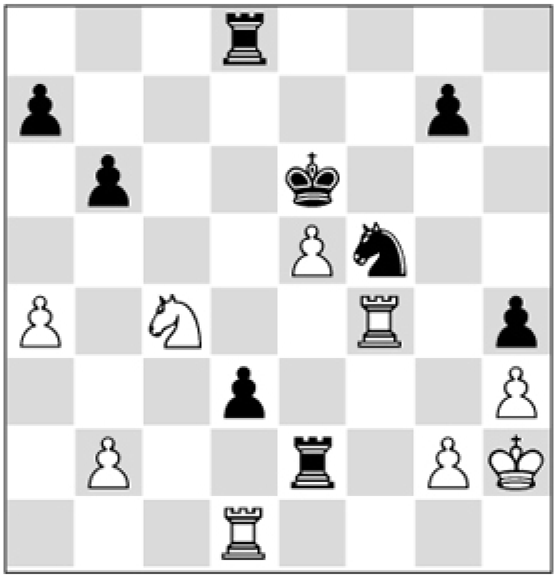
32.a4

On 32.e6, 32…♖e2! would follow; e.g., 33.♖xd3 (33.♖xe2? dxe2 34.♖xd8+ ♔h7 and Black wins) 33…♖xe1 34.♖xd8+ ♔h7 and the threat 35…♘g3 is decisive. If after 32.e6 ♖e2! White tries to win a tempo which is important for his defense – e.g., 33.e7 ♘xe7? 34.♖xd3! ♖xe1 35.♖xd8+ ♔f7 36.♘d6+ ♔e6 37.♘c8!, with a draw – Black simply plays 33…♖e8, winning the pawn.

32…♚f7

This move is completely correct, as may be seen in the following analysis: 33.e6+ ♔e8! 34.♘e5 d2 35.♖e4 ♖d4 (just not the witty 35…♖f1, for after 36.♖xf1 ♘g3 there would follow the counter-wit 37.♖f8+! ♔xf8 38.♘g6+ and 39.♖xh4, when mate on h8 would be the disagreeable aftermath) 36.♖xd4 ♘xd4 37.♘c4 ♘b3 38.♔g1 ♖f4 39.♘e3 ♖xa4 and White is lost. Incidentally, instead of the chosen move 32…♔f7 Black could have calmly played 32…♖e2, but it is always better to play for a blockade.

33.♜e4 ♜e2 34.♜f4 ♚e6



Black has now achieved all his aims, namely, the rook positioned at e2 and the blockade at e6. Now it only remains to drive the knight from c4.

35.♖g4 d2 36.♖g6+ ♔f7 37.♖g4 a6! 38.♖f4 ♔e6 39.♘d6 ♘e3

White resigned.

Game 52

Lajos Steiner
Aron Nimzowitsch
Dresden 1926 (6)

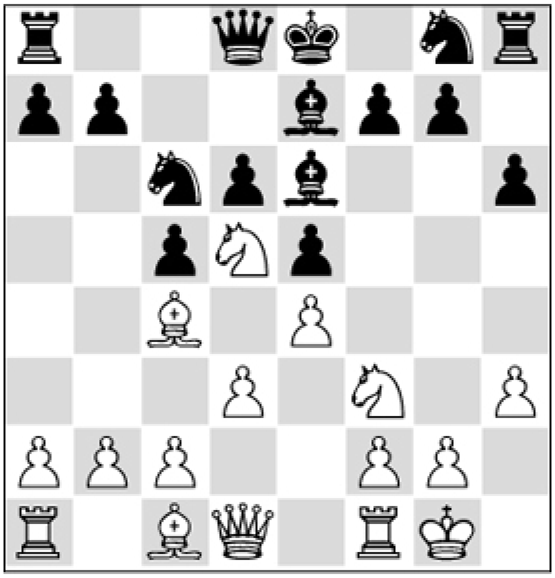
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5

Such a move involves courage – and belief in the significance of the blockade. The text move gives up a tempo (the non-development of a piece) and creates a hole on d5, all to prevent d2-d4 and in this way restrain his opponent.

4.♗c4 d6 5.h3 ♗e6 6.d3 ♗e7 7.0-0 h6

Black bides his time. His opponent is lacking in effective moves.

8.♘d5



To emphasize the strength of d5, but, as soon becomes clear, this can be accomplished only with sacrifices – material or positional.

8…♘f6

Putting d5 under fire…

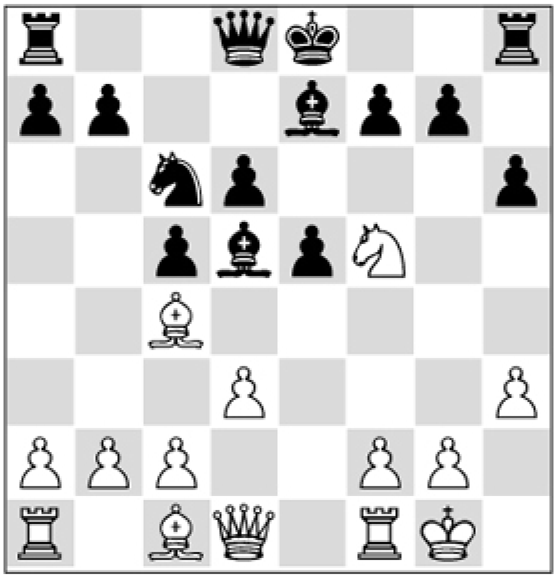
9.♘h4

…. while White seeks to maintain it by combinative means.

9…♘xd5

9…♘xe4 10.dxe4 ♗xh4 would be bad because of 11.f4.

10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♘f5



The supportive sacrificial operation (see the 8th move and the note to it). White wins his pawn back, to be sure, but he gets a doubled pawn: the sacrifice consequently turns out to be positional. Instead of this he also had the option of sacrificing material with 11.♗xd5 ♗xh4 and now 12.f4, with attacking chances. Both the positional and material sacrifices should in my view be sufficient for a draw.

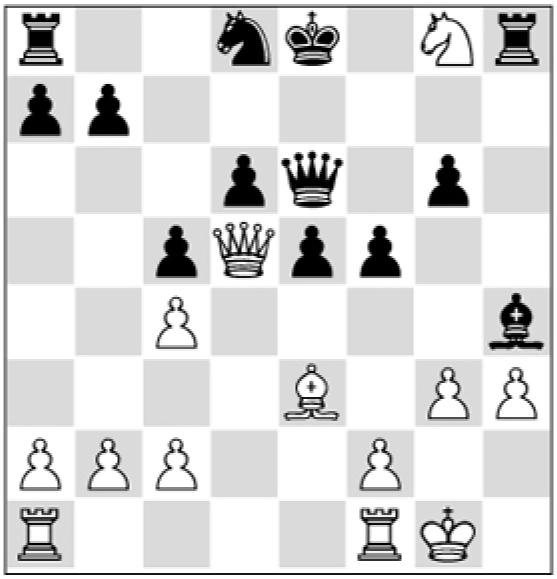
11…♝xc4 12.dxc4 g6!

Or 12…0-0 13.♕g4 ♗g5 14.h4, etc.

13.♞xh6 ♛d7 14.♛d5 ♞d8 15.♝e3

If 15.♘g4, then 15…f5 16.♘e3 ♘e6 and 17…0-0-0. The situation can be characterized as follows: Black would have play down the h-file, while any attacking attempt on the part of White would die from exsanguination in the face of his opponent's compact pawn mass.

15…f5 16.♞g8 ♝h4 17.g3 ♛e6



18.♜ad1?

The losing move. The immediate 18.gxh4 ♖xg8 (not 18…♕xd5? because of 19.♘f6+) 19.♗g5, as I think today, should be enough to draw; e.g., 19…♕xd5 20.cxd5 ♖h8 21.f4 e4 22.♖ae1 and 23.♖e3.

18…♜xg8 19.gxh4 f4

Now the bishop can no longer get to g5.

20.♝xf4

Or 20.♗c1 ♕xd5 21.♖xd5 ♘f7 followed by …0-0-0 and …♖h8, with an easy win for Black.

20…♕xd5 21.♖xd5 exf4 22.♖xd6 ♔e7 23.♖fd1 b6 24.♖d7+ ♔f6

and White gave up after a few more inconsequential moves.

One gets the impression that the line of play that weakens d5 somewhat (1…c5 in conjunction with 3…e5) is nonetheless sound, for White could maintain himself at d5 only with arduous effort, and this should have been good for *a draw at best.*

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Part III

Over-Protection and Other Forms of Prophylaxis

‘Strategically important points should be over-protected’, according to a principle I discovered. ‘For if the pieces participate in over-protection, a reward beckons to them in the fact that they, who help protect strategically important points, also find themselves well placed in every respect. Hence the importance of the strategic point imbues them with its own luster, to express it in a manner that is not without its pathos.’

This conception could be expressed more simply by saying: the contact between the strong point itself and the over-protecting pieces should benefit both – the strong point because the prophylaxis thus employed affords the greatest conceivable security against possible attacks, and the over-protectors because the strong point becomes for them a perpetual source of energy from which they can draw fresh power.

The author of this book has nearly always derived excellent results from over-protection. It is true that from time to time some sardonic critic has tried to ridicule the idea, but objective findings will always show this person to be wrong. The difficulties in the following games are allegedly due to over-protection:

I. **Nimzowitsch-Capablanca**, New York 1927: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5** Leading to a nice equality. **3…♝f5 4.♝d3 ♝xd3 5.♛xd3 e6 6.♞c3 ♛b6 7.♞ge2 c5 8.dxc5 ♝xc5 9.0-0 ♞e7 10.♞a4 ♛c6 11.♞xc5 ♛xc5 12.♝e3 ♛c7 13.f4** Good also was 13.♘d4, anticipating …♘f5. **13…♞f5 14.c3** With this move White begins the systematic over-protection of d4, which would seem fully worthy of this concentrated attention as it is a centrally located blockade square – and, on top of that, a pawn once stood on d4 that formed the basis of a proud pawn chain. And even though the d4-pawn has long since disappeared and the chain is now supported from f4, the splendor and immense importance of the d4-square remain practically unchanged. From this it becomes clear that the grouping of White’s pieces around d4 must be of enormous value in terms of consolidation.

Granted, other lines of play are possible; e.g., 14.♖ac1 (instead of 14.c3) followed by c2-c4. But what would this prove? Just that over-protection is not the one and only stratagem. **14…♞c6 15.♜ad1 g6 16.g4** Only here is White’s play in error; after 16.♗f2 h5 17.g3 Black would be at a loss to find a continuation. **16…♞xe3 17.♛xe3 h5 18.g5 0-0 19.♞d4 ♛b6** and Black got the better game through his play along the c-file in conjunction with his occupation of f5. Instead of 19.♘d4 White should have played 19.♕c5; e.g., 19…♖fc8 20.♘d4 ♘e7 21.♕xc7 followed by ♔g1-f2-e3-d3, with a safe game, or 19.♕c5 ♖fc8 20.♘d4 ♕d8 21.♕b5.

II. From the same tournament, **Spielmann-Nimzowitsch**: **1.e4 ♞c6 2.♞f3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.e5 b6 5.c3 ♞ce7 6.♝d3 a5 7.♛e2 ♞f5** A prototype of my game vs. Sämisch at Berlin 1928; see Game 13. **8.h4 h5 9.♞g5 g6** *False* over-protection, an important fact that was unfortunately missed completely by the critics. The correct play consisted in the immediate 9…♘ge7. White then could not have carried out the maneuver ♘b1-d2-f1 followed by f2-f3 and g2-g4; e.g., 9…♘ge7 10.♘d2 c5, when the basis of the chain at d4 is shaky. **10.♞d2 ♞ge7** 10…♗e7 would have been better, as over-protection here is pointless in view of the fact that White’s f2-f3 and g2-g4 simply cannot be prevented. There followed: **11.♞f1 c5 12.f3 c4 13.♝c2 b5 14.g4 ♞g7** and White stood better (even though he eventually lost due to an impetuous attack). So it can be seen that in this game, too, over-protection, properly carried out, would have proven useful.

On the subject of over-protection we should like to add that only important, strong (and *not* weak) points are to be over-protected. Further, it is desirable that the points in question be, at least to some extent, *objects of contention*.

Instructive instances of this are shown in Games 20 and 44. Prophylaxis is shown in Games 53 through 56. We found it especially important to demonstrate the affinity between waiting moves and preventive moves. In the game vs. Behting (53), 8…a6 would appear to achieve nothing after the reply 9.a4!, and yet after this retort White's chances in the endgame would have been attenuated somewhat.

A move that forestalls an opponent's *sharp* threat need not for that reason lack a deeper prophylactic significance. This we can see at move 6 of Game 55. When a player obviates the reduction of his own playing chances, he has certainly made use of prophylaxis (see Game 55). Only seldom is prophylaxis associated with a threat; this does occur, however, and in fact constitutes a noteworthy sub-species of prophylaxis (see move 24 of Game 54).

One more point: which of the unpleasant events that can occur in a chess game make it worthwhile to apply systematic preventive measures? Well, they are the 'positional' threats that our opponent would like to realize. In this sense, Game 53 is particularly instructive: the difficult and exceedingly complicated maneuver (Black's 21st move, etc.) is meant to help prevent his opponent's threatened *centralization*. Modern tournament practice is rich in prophylactic maneuvers; we point out, in particular, Games 7, 13, 20, 21, 32, 33, 38, 39, and 43.

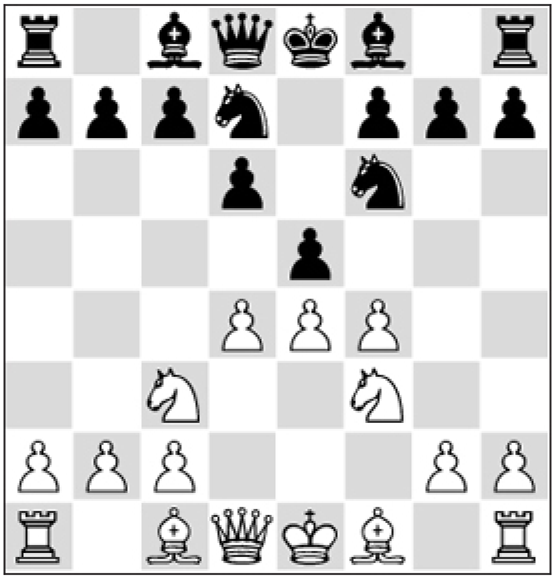
Game 53

Carl Behting
Aron Nimzowitsch
Casual game, Riga 1910

1.e4 d6 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.f4 e5

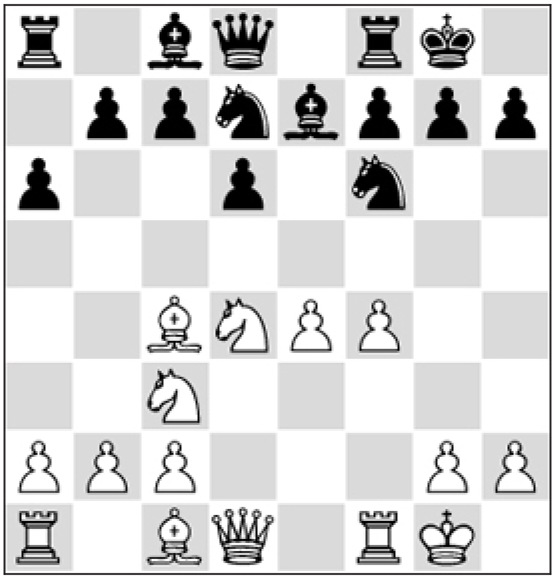
This leads to the position in the King's Gambit Declined after …d7-d6.

4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.d4



This move is not to be censured in any way, for the e4-pawn will of course be held without difficulty. Compare the note to the 8th move.

5…exd4 6.♘xd4 ♝e7 7.♝c4 0-0 8.0-0 a6



One of those mysterious moves for which, from its inception, the pseudo-classical school could only find words of derision. For the closed formation that results from the advances …c7-c5 and …b7-b5 is only a secondary objective here. The main object is to *await* White's ♕f3, in order then to adopt the prophylactic set-up …♖e8 and …♗f8. The immediate 8…♖e8 would fail to the reply 9.♘f3!, with the double threat 10.e5 and 10.♘g5. Hence the move 8…a6 amounts to a sacrifice of tempo for the sake of playing the ‘prophylaxis’ …♖e8, etc. This conception *had to* appear to the strategists of former times as an egregious intellectual impertinence, since for the very idea of prophylaxis they had nothing more than a contemptuous shrug. And to *prepare* for it with a loss of tempo was for them ‘bizarre’, ‘perverse’, etc. … Well, in reality, 8…a6 may be regarded as a very fine move: the pawn on e4 is both statically and dynamically full of vitality, so that restraining operations require circumspection and patience, that is to say, waiting and preventive moves. A direct approach, such as, say, 8…♘b6 (instead of 8…a6), after 9.♗e2! d5 10.e5 ♘e4 11.f5, would only have led to disadvantage for Black.

9.♘f5

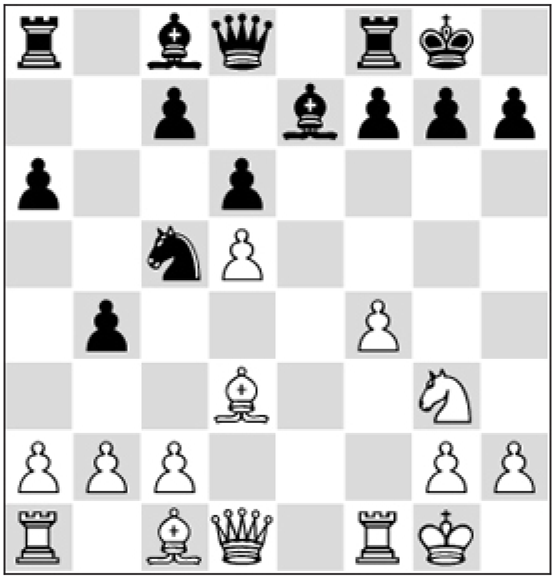
Possible here was 9.a4, which would have restored the *status quo ante*. In reply, I probably would have decided on 9…c6; e.g., 10.♗a2! (Black threatened 10…d5 followed by …♘b6), and now 10…♖e8. If 11.♘f3, then 11…h6, when the advance 12.e5? would be mistaken due to 12…dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♕xd1 15.♗xf7+ ♔f8 16.♖xd1 ♗c5+ and 17…♖xe5.

9…♘c5 10.♘g3

If 10.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11.♖e1, then 11…b5 (not 11…♘fxe4 because of 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗d5) 12.♗d5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♕d8 (or 13…♕d7), when Black gets some play against the pawn at e4.

The text move does a thorough job of protecting this pawn, but it means an ensuing decentralization (♘f5-g3).

10…b5 11.♗d3 b4 12.♘d5 ♘xd5 13.exd5

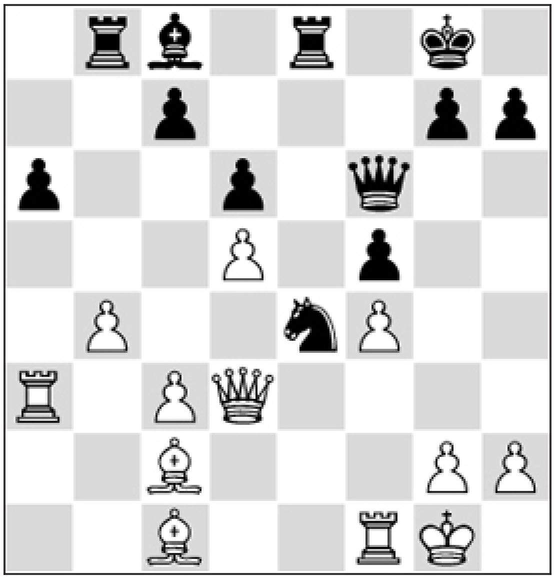


Black has scored a success, certainly, in that the white center, thanks to 13.exd5, is now dynamically useless. On the other hand, he is faced with the difficult task of having to take preventive measures on both sides of the board at the same time: for White is planning a2-a3, rolling up the queenside, as well as f4-f5, with gain of territory. With 13…a5! both threats could have been prevented (because of the threat 14…♘xd3 15.♕xd3 ♗a6).

13…f5

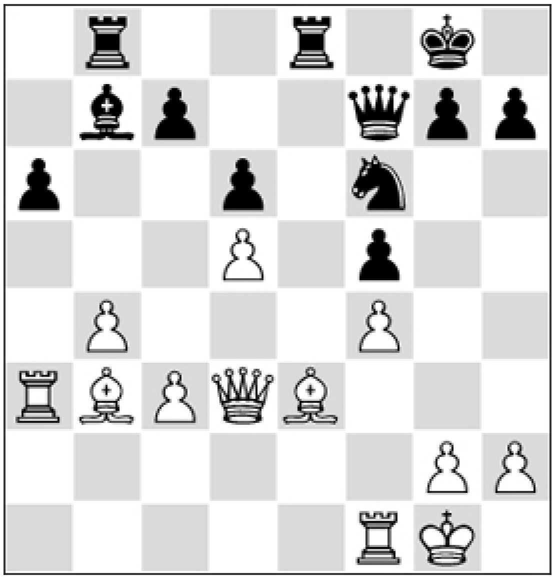
Forestalling the possibility 14.f5, but at the same time looking to play down the e-file with …♗h4, …♗xg3, and …♖e8 followed by establishing the knight on e4.

14.a3! bxa3 15.♜xa3 ♜b8 16.c3 ♝h4 17.♛f3 ♝xg3 18.♛xg3 ♜e8 19.♝c2 ♛f6 20.b4 ♞e4 21.♛d3



Black has been able to get along well enough without preventive action on the queenside, as the weakness of the a-pawn is compensated for by his strength down the e-file. But he cannot do without preventive action any longer, as White is aiming to centralize with ♗c1-e3-d4, when Black would have in fact have a worse game. How can White's intended build-up be anticipated?

21…♕f7! 22.♗e3 ♘f6! 23.♗b3 ♗b7



24.♖d1

This is not good; I had of course expected 24.c4, when I would have restored the earlier position with 24…♗c8 25.♗d2 ♘e4 26.♗e1 ♕f6; but then my opponent would inevitably have lost control of the long diagonal.

This preventive combination, which incorporates a six-move return-variation, should help enlighten the attentive reader about the richness and variety of the combinative preventive material at his disposal. I number this among my favorite combinations.

24…♝xd5! 25.♝xd5 ♛xd5 26.♛xd5+ ♞xd5 27.♝a7

A dangerous move which, however, Black had not overlooked when he went in for the exchanges.

The continuation 27.♖xd5 ♖xe3 28.♖xf5 ♖be8 would be favorable for Black.

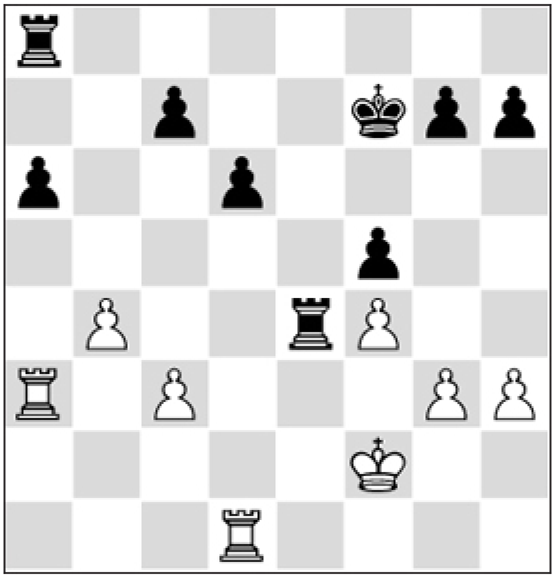
27…♞e3 28.♜d3 ♞g4 29.♜d1 ♜a8 30.♝d4

On 30.♖xa6, too, Black would get the advantage with 30…♖e4 31.g3 (or 31.♖f1 ♘e3 and …♘d5) ♖e2.

30…♜e4 31.h3 ♞e3 32.♝xe3

Now forced because of 32…♘c4 or 32…♘d5.

32…♜xe3 33.♚f2 ♜e4 34.g3 ♚f7

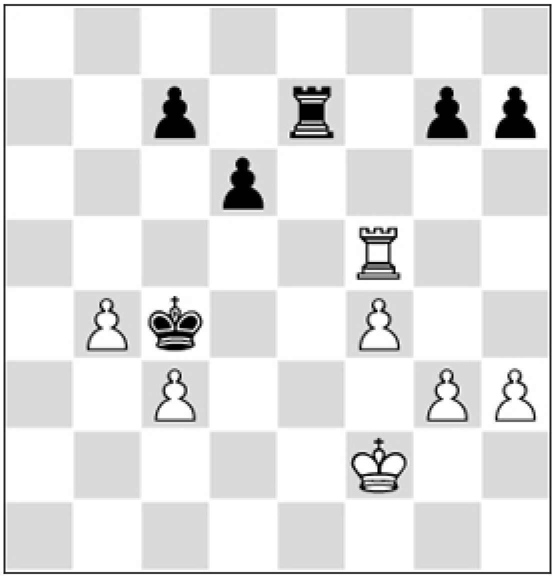


Black gives up the a6-pawn so that his king can intervene with decisive effect.

35.♖da1 ♚e6 36.♖xa6 ♜xa6 37.♖xa6 ♚d5 38.♖a5+

Black threatened 38…♖c4 followed by …♔e4-d3.

38…♚c4 39.♖xf5 ♜e7!



White’s king is cut off and Black threatens to create two connected passed pawns.

White still tried:

40.b5 ♚xc3 41.b6 cxb6

Not 41…c6 because of 42.♖a5 ♖b7 43.♖a7 ♖xb6 44.♖xg7, when the issue is still very much in doubt.

42.♖d5 ♜d7 43.♖b5 ♜b7 44.♖d5 b5 45.♖xd6 b4 46.♔e2 b3 47.♖c6+ ♚b2 48.f5 ♚b1 49.g4 b2 50.g5 ♚a2

and White gave up after a few more moves.

Game 54

Carl Schlechter

Aron Nimzowitsch

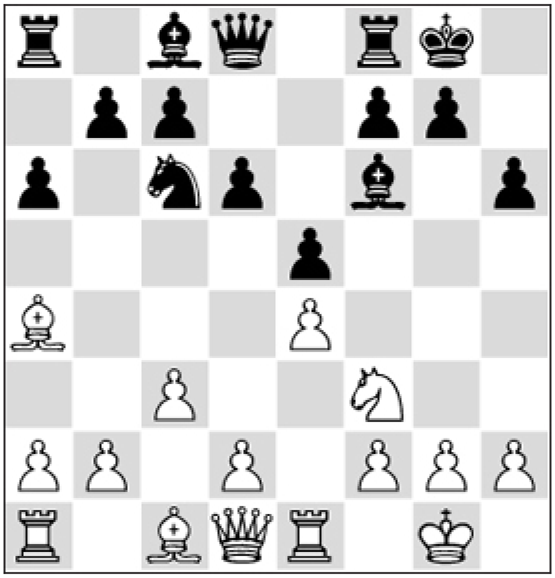
Karlsbad 1907 (17)

After the opening moves…

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♞f6 5.♘c3 ♝b4 6.♘d5 ♝e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖e1 d6 9.♘xf6+ ♝xf6 10.c3

… Black restrained himself with a waiting policy:

10…h6



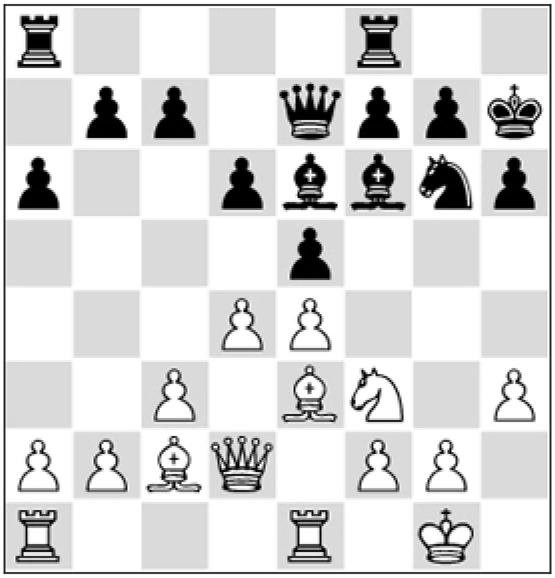
For his position – a defensive ‘frog position’ par excellence – does not permit of any great changes. The waiting move played is intended to emphasize this.

There followed:

11.h3 ♘e7 12.d4 ♘g6 13.♗e3 ♔h7

Black ‘marks time’.

14.♕d2 ♗e6 15.♗c2 ♕e7



16.d5

White, too, would have done better to mark time. The text move would have meaning only if it were introducing an attack against the enemy queenside (with c3-c4 and b2-b4). But White prefers to operate against the kingside, and for this d4-d5 is poor preparation.

16…♗d7 17.♔h2 ♘h8!

A preventive move directed against the war plan ♘g1 and f2-f4.

18.♘g1 g5 19.g3 ♘g6 20.♕d1 ♗g7 21.♕f3 a5

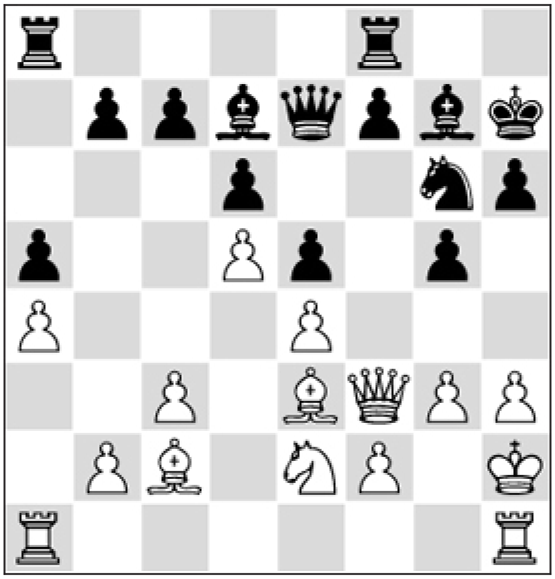
Again a preventive measure, this time to forestall the possibility of c3-c4 followed by b2-b4.

22.♘e2 ♗b5 23.a4 ♗d7

It is achieved: the white queenside has lost its power to punch through – the aforementioned action with c3-c4 and b2-b4 is now passé.

24.♖h1!

With this move Schlechter plans an opportune breakthrough with h3-h4; e.g., 24…b6 25.h4 gxh4 26.gxh4 ♘xh4 27.♕h5 f5 28.♔g1, etc. But Black finds a move that not only has a high preventive value but which also has the benefit of inducing his opponent to rash activity.



24…♕e8!!

Threatening 25…♕c8; e.g., 26.h4? ♗g4, winning the knight. White therefore has no time for further preparations and initiates the battle to effect a breakthrough.

25.h4 ♕c8!

Threatening 26…♗g4.

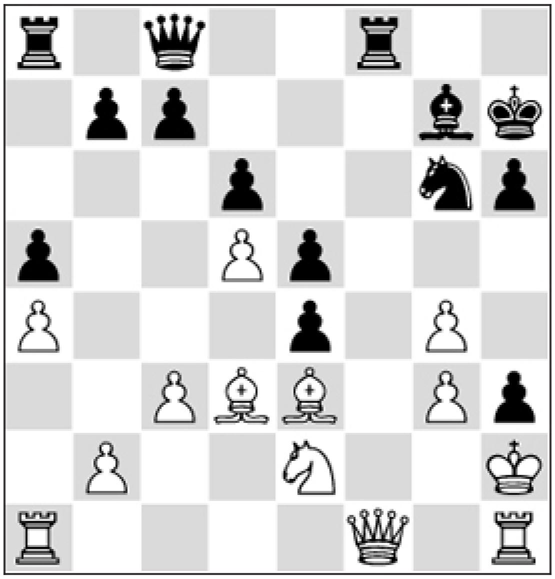
26.♗d3 ♗g4 27.♕g2 gxh4 28.f3 h3 29.♕f1

The breakthrough seems to be succeeding, for if now 29…♗d7, then 30.g4 followed by ♕xh3, with a decisive attack.

29…f5!

The long-prepared counter-stroke, which decides the battle for Black.

30.fxg4 fxe4



Only now can the full import of 28…h3 be seen. By this move the white queen was pushed from g2 to f1, into the firing line of the rook at f8.

31.♕xh3 exd3 32.♗xh6 ♖h8!

White resigned.

The game distinguishes itself by, *inter alia*, its comprehensive prophylaxis. Preventive measures were undertaken against c3-c4 and b2-b4, also against f2-f4 and, finally, h3-h4.

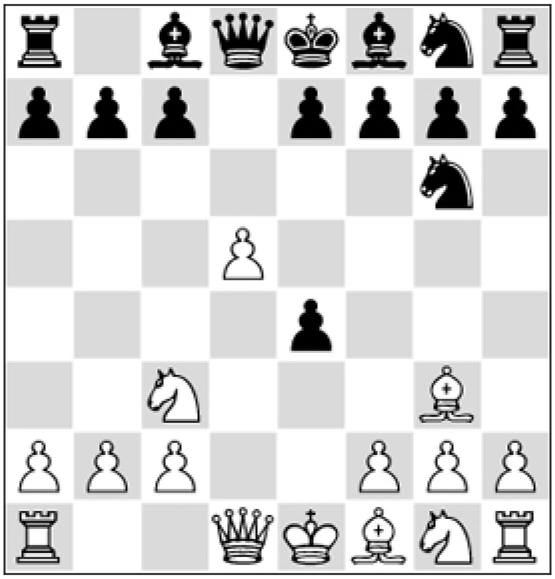
A few words about the character of the preventive moves adopted in this game. The waiting policy by 10…h6 is, in my view, in keeping with this style of play, for *waiting moves constitute the beginning of every prophylaxis!*

The fact that the preventive move 24…♕e8!! at the same time contains a threat does not by any means make it ‘impure’, for what we are dealing with here is rather a very particular aspect of prophylaxis, in which goading one’s opponent into accelerated action is part of the plan.

Game 55

Werner Wendel
Aron Nimzowitsch
Stockholm 1921

1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.d5 ♘e5 5.♗f4 ♘g6 6.♗g3



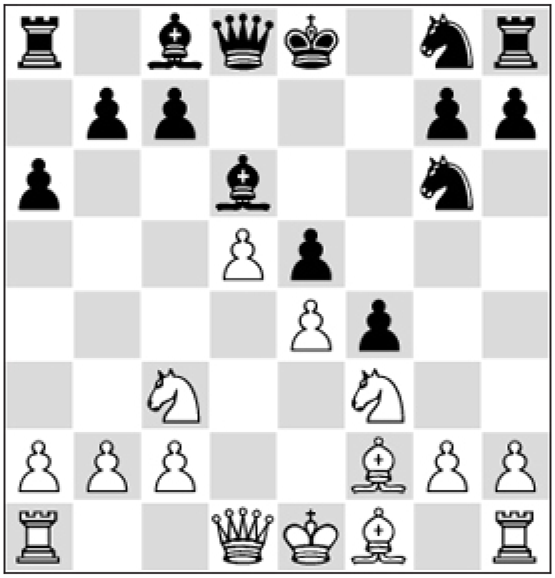
6…a6

This move must be properly understood. The threat 7.♘b5 would seem to be warded off more simply with 6…f5, especially as this advance is in fact played next move. But Black – and this is inherent to the *nature of prophylaxis* – does not want to show his cards too soon. On 6…f5, 7.h4 would follow and Black would find himself in a quandary; e.g., 7…f4 8.h5 fxg3 9.hxg6 gxf2+ 10.♔xf2 and now – admittedly late – the accessibility of the b5-square becomes relevant.

7.f3! f5! 8.fxe4

If now 8.h4, then 8…e5 9.h5 ♕g5, with advantage to Black.

8…f4 9.♗f2 e5 10.♘f3 ♗d6



Dictated by the law of the blockade: passed and semi-passed pawns must be blockaded! The position is now about even. White should now strive to bring his majority into the fray by c2-c4-c5, but in the position before us this plan would involve great difficulties.

11.h4

Here I would have preferred 11.♗d3 followed by 0-0,♘e2 and c2-c4.

11…b5!

A diversion that grows organically out of the preventive move 6…a6.

12.h5 ♞f8 13.♝h4 ♛d7!

Threatening 14…♕g4.

14.♝e2 b4! 15.♞b1 ♞f6!

The point. As e4 and h5 are being attacked simultaneously, 16.♗xf6 is forced, and all at once Black's pieces gain additional room to maneuver (…♕g7).

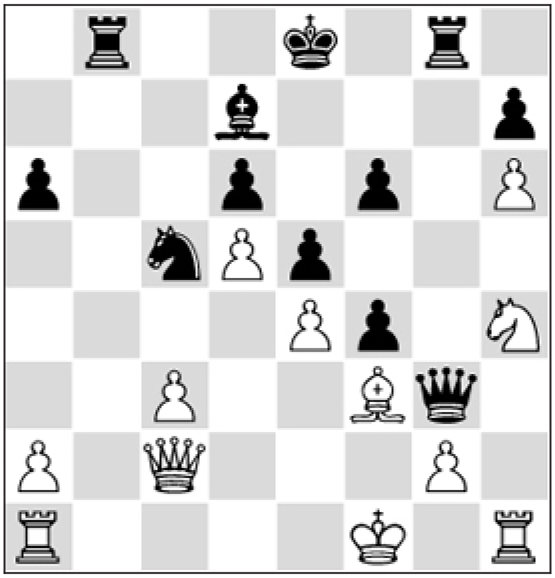
16.♝xf6 gxf6 17.♞bd2 ♛g7 18.♚f1 ♞d7 19.h6 ♛g3

Played to provoke ♖h3, by which White loses a tempo on the 22nd move.

20.♜h3 ♛g8 21.♞h4 ♞c5 22.♜h1 ♜b8 23.c3

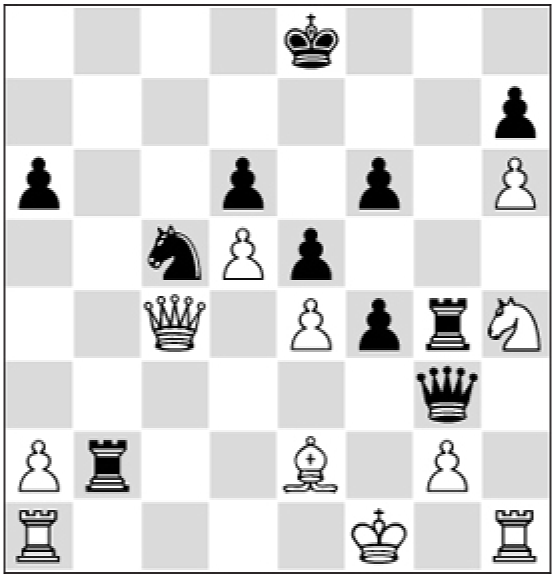
This opening of the b-file is to Black's advantage, but he would stand better in any case.

23…bxc3 24.bxc3 ♛g3 25.♛c2 ♜g8 26.♞c4! ♝d7 27.♞xd6+ cxd6 28.♝f3



White has consolidated his position to some extent and his opponent has to reckon with an attempt by him to shake free with 29.♕f2 or even by 29.♘f5 ♗xf5 30.exf5, with the amusing drawing threat 31.♖h3 ♕g5 32.♖h5, etc. Very good here would be the prophylactic king’s tour 28…♔d8 and …♔c7, when he would be threatening to double the rooks on the b-file. If, after 28…♔d8 White plays his intended 29.♕f2, there follows 29…♕xf2+ 30.♔xf2 ♖b2+ 31.♔g1 f5 32.♖e1 ♖xa2 33.exf5 ♔e7. But if, after 28…♔d8, White chooses the diversion 29.♘f5, there follows 29…♗xf5 30.exf5 and the rook occupies the correct file at once with 30…♖e8; if then 31.♖h3, the queen retreats to g8 and Black has the much stronger game. 28…♔d8 would therefore be an excellent preventive move, breaking off the spearhead of any attack, even in the distant future, on the queen or king. Yet there is in the position a hidden combination that leads to the goal more quickly than 28…♔d8, and to this I gave the preference.

28…♝b5+ 29.c4 ♝xc4+ 30.♛xc4 ♜b2 31.♝e2 ♜g4!



32.♛c1

This is the parry I had expected. If instead 32.♖h3, then 32…♖xh4 33.♖xg3 ♖h1+ 34.♔f2 fxg3+ 35.♔xg3 ♖xa1 and Black wins the a-pawn and decides the game by a direct rook attack, with the passed pawn lurking in the background as well.

32…♜xh4 33.♜xh4 ♜xe2 34.♚xe2 ♛xg2+!

The point. The rook on h4 will not run away and Black now gains a decisive preponderance of pawns.

35.♚d1 ♛f1+ 36.♚d2

The otherwise better 36.♔c2 would come to naught against the problem-like mate 36…♕d3+ 37.♔b2 ♘a4#.

36…♛d3+ 37.♚e1 ♛g3+ 38.♚f1 ♛xh4

Now White is lost.

39.♚g1 ♛g3+ 40.♚h1 ♛h3+' 41.♚g1 ♞xe4 42.♛c6+

With the help of a few checks the queen returns to the defense at g2.

42…♚f7 43.♛c7+ ♚g6 44.♛g7+ ♚h5 45.♛g2 ♛e3+ 46.♚h2 ♞f2! 47.♜f1

On 47.♖g1, then simply 47…♕e2, as White has no check.

47…♞g4+ 48.♚h1 e4 49.♜g1 f5 50.a4 ♚xh6 51.a5 ♚g5 52.♜b1 f3 53.♛b2 f2

White resigned.

One of my best games.

Game 56

Frederick Yates
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927 (10)

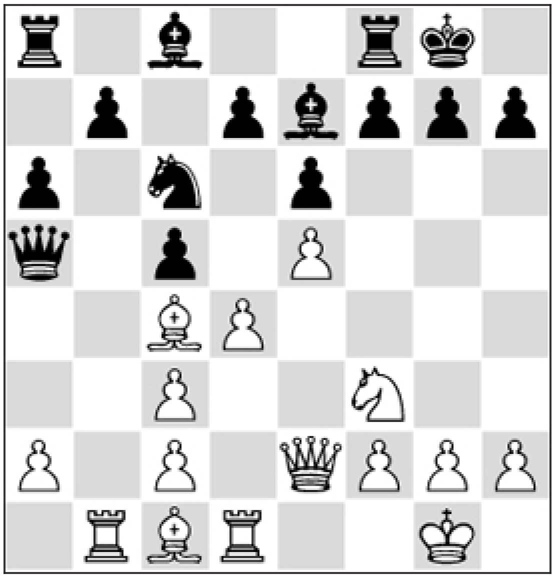
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3 ♘xc3 5.bxc3 ♕a5

A conscious exaggeration of the principle of prophylaxis: one may not use the queen for such a purpose, but only a minor piece. But I wanted to set problems for my opponent at any price.

6.♝c4 e6 7.♕e2 ♝e7 8.0-0 ♘c6

It would seem more consistent to shut out the queen completely with 8…b6. Black would then have the option of …♗a6 or …♗b7.

9.♜d1 0-0 10.♜b1 a6 11.d4



Yates has very nicely solved the problem set for him by Black’s 5th move; if now 11…♕xc3, he intends 12.♗b2 ♕a5 13.d5 ♘b8 (or 13…♗a7) 14.d6 ♗d8 and Black is in danger.

11…b5 12.♝d3 c4 13.♝e4 f5

Otherwise 14.d5 follows.

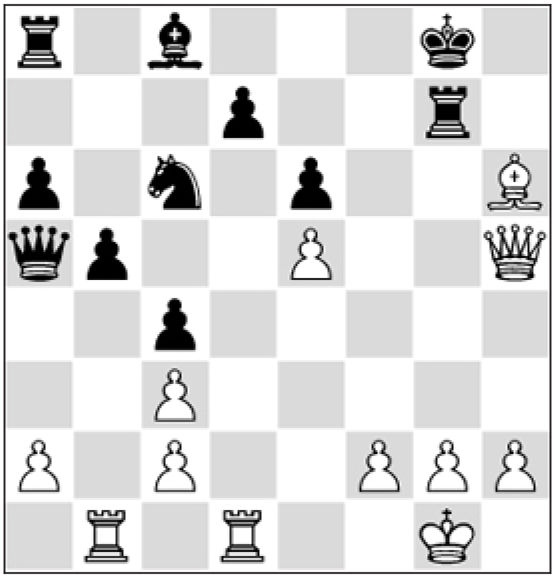
14.exf6 ♝xf6 15.♘e5 ♝xe5

Forced.

16.dxe5 ♜f7 17.♕h5

A terrible shock!

17…g6 18.♝xg6 hxg6 19.♕xg6+ ♜g7 20.♕e8+ ♚h7 21.♕h5+ ♚g8 22.♝h6



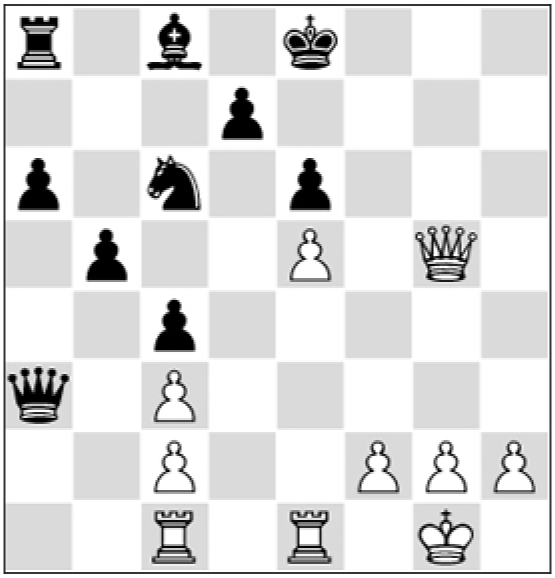
22…♛xa2

In his awkward and disagreeable position Black manages to find the only move that promises salvation. After 22…♕xc3, on the other hand, he would lose quickly; e.g., 23.♕e8+ ♔h7 24.♗xg7 ♔xg7 25.♖xd7+ ♗xd7 26.♕xd7+ ♔h8 27.♕xc6 and wins.

23.♝xg7

Preserving the bishop was worth strong consideration; e.g., 23.♖bc1 (instead of 23.♗xg7) 23…♕a3 24.♖d6

23…♚xg7 24.♛g5+ ♚f7 25.♜bc1 ♛a3! 26.♜e1 ♚e8



The king leaves the heavily bombarded area. Now the first player should have remembered that his h-pawn is passed. But no – Yates continues to play for mate!

27.♜e4 ♛e7 28.♛h6 ♚d8 29.♜d1 ♚c7 30.♜g4 ♛c5 31.♜e4

A wonderful combination was possible here. Observe: 31.h4 a5 32.♕g7 a4 33.h5 a3 34.h6 a2 35.h7 a1♕ 36.♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 37.♔h2. Now Black wins as follows: 37…♕xf2 38.h8♕ ♕g1+ 39.♔g3 ♕e3+ 40.♔h2 ♖f1!! (threatening 41…♕e1 and mate next) 41.♕h4 ♕c1! 42.♕hf6! ♕e1!! (not 42…♖xf6 because of 43.exf6 and wins) 43.♕xf1 ♕xf1 and Black must win. Yet, 31.h4 is a good move; only White must not continue after 31…a5 with 32.♕g7. Correct, instead, is 32.h5 a4 33.♕d2!

In light of all this, after 31.h4, the following line looks best: 31…a5 32.h5 ♕xe5! 33.♕f4 ♕xf4 34.♖xf4 ♗b7 35.♖f7 ♘e5 36.♖g7 ♗d5! 37.f4 ♖h8 38.fxe5 ♖xh5 39.♖e1 ♖f5! and Black is better.

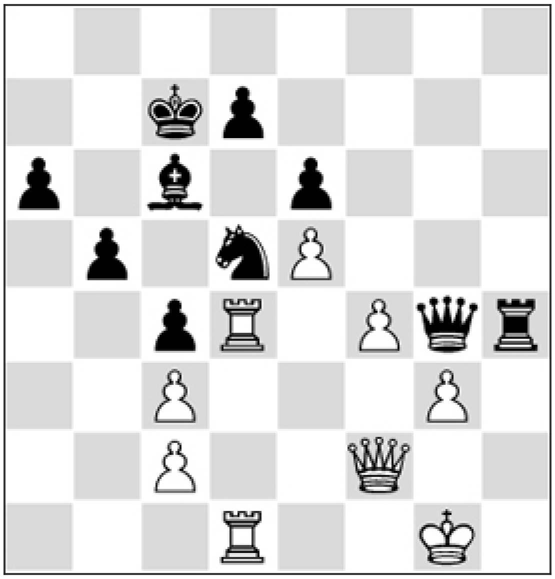
31…♞e7! 32.♛d2

32.♕e3 was mandatory. White’s passed pawns can become dangerous only after the exchange of queens. If 32.♕e3, however, there would follow: 32…♕xe3 33.♖xe3 ♗b7 34.g4 ♘g6 35.h3 ♖f8 36.♖f1 ♘f4, with the threat 37…♗g2, or 36…a5 (instead of 36…♘f4) 37.♔h2 a4 38.♔g3 and now 38…♘f4 (with the threat 39…♘g2 40.♖e2 ♖f3+) and Black should have the better game.

32…♞d5 33.h4 ♝b7 34.♜d4 ♜h8 35.♛e1 ♝c6 36.g3 ♛f8 37.f4 ♛f5

With decisive effect.

38.♛f2 ♛h3 39.♛h2 ♛g4 40.♛f2 ♜xh4!



41.f5 ♘f6!

And not to f4 because of 42.♖xd7+, etc.

42.♕e3 ♕xd1+

Elegant and decisive.

43.♖xd1 ♖h1+ 44.♔f2 ♘g4+ 45.♔e2 ♖h2+ 46.♔e1 ♘xe3

White resigned.

Game 57

John Harald Morrison
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927

This and the following game are devoted to over-protection.

1.e4 e6 2.g3

Tartakower’s interesting suggestion.

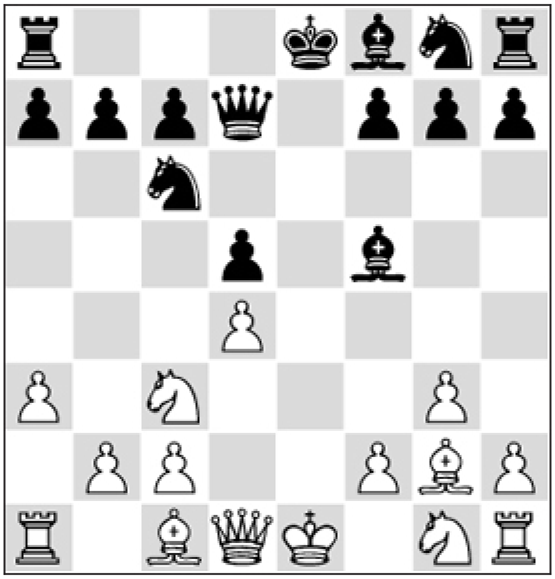
2…d5 3.♘c3

3.♗g2 and 4.d3 is the obvious continuation. On c3 the knight can be kicked by the d-pawn.

3…♘c6 4.exd5

4.d3 and 5.♗g2 would have been better.

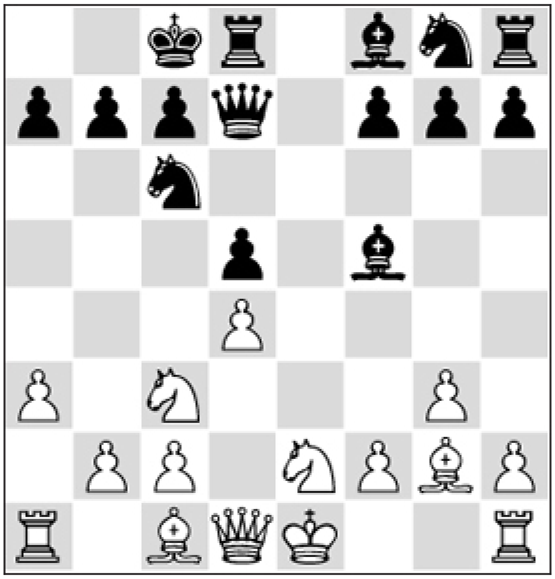
4…exd5 5.d4 ♗f5 6.a3 ♕d7 7.♗g2



7…0-0-0!

Because the d-pawn is protected indirectly; e.g., 8.♘xd5 ♕e6+ 9.♘e3 ♘xd4, or 8.♗xd5 ♘f6 9.♗xc6 ♕xc6, with a superior attacking game.

8.♘ge2



8…♘ce7!

Here are the individual components of this rather strange-looking line of play: 1. The e4-square clearly has to be regarded as strategically important (as it is an outpost on the e-file); 2. Consequently, the d5-pawn that supports this point is valuable, so over-protecting this valuable pawn is in keeping with our strategy of over-protection. The only question in this case is 3. whether Black can really maintain a knight at e4. The fact that he can must be recognized at this point – cf. Black’s 12th move.

It would be much weaker, by the way, to play the ‘natural’ defensive move 8…♘f6 because of 9.♗g5.

9.♞f4 ♞f6

Now ♗g5 can no longer be played.

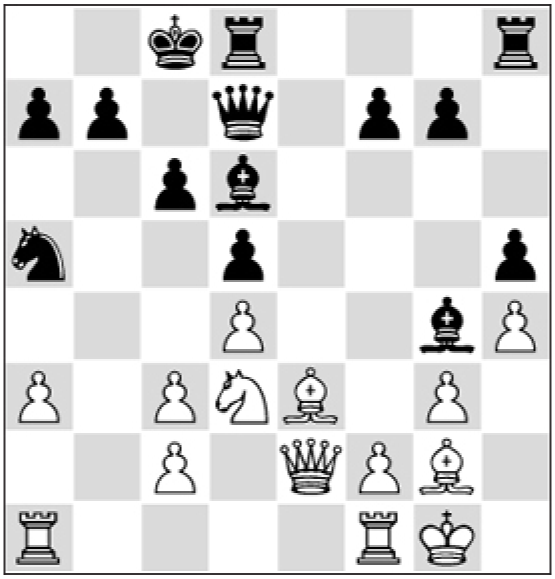
10.h3 h5 11.♞d3 ♞e4! 12.♝e3

Threatening 13.♘xe4 and 14.♘c5. The prospects of the forward-posted knight appear to have seriously worsened; indeed, the whole set-up with 8…♘ce7 would seem to be just about refuted. But no, it is not so!

12…♞xc3!

The e4-knight inflicts a bloody wound, namely the doubled pawns on c2 and c3. White’s b-file is pretty much worthless and he will be slowly crushed. And so the knight at e4 has succeeded in maintaining itself, even though not in the strict sense of the word. Compare the note to the 8th move.

13.bxc3 ♞c6 14.♞b4 ♝e6 15.♛e2 ♞a5! 16.h4 c6 17.0-0 ♝d6 18.♞d3 ♝g4



In possession of an enormously important point at c4 and a stellar development, Black now commences the attack on his opponent’s weakened kingside.

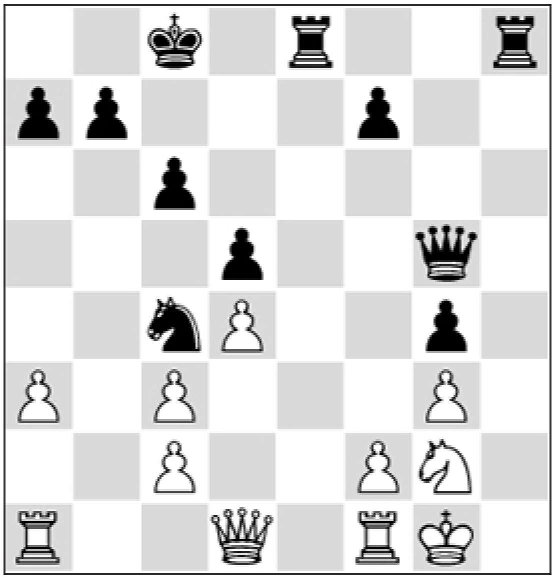
19.♝f3

There is hardly anything better.

19…♜de8 20.♝xg4 hxg4 21.♛d1! ♞c4

Side-stepping the trap 21…♗xg3? 22.♘c5! and White wins.

22.♝f4 ♝xf4 23.♞xf4 g5 24.hxg5 ♛f5 25.♞g2 ♛xg5



26.f4

If 26.♘h4, then 26…♖xh4 27.gxh4 ♕xh4 28.♖e1 ♖h8 29.♔f1 ♕h1+ 30.♔e2 ♕f3+, etc. Note the participation of the knight at c4.

26…♛h5 27.♚f2

A shame, as I expected 27.♖e1 and had prepared the pretty move 27…♖e3; e.g., 28.♘xe3 ♕h1+ and 29…♖h2+.

27…♞d6

Abandoning the c4-square, but at this point e4 is even stronger.

28.♞h4 ♞e4+

Black resigned, for if 29.♔g2, 29…♘xg3 decides immediately.

Game 58

Aron Nimzowitsch
Arthur Hakansson
Kristianstad 1922 (3)

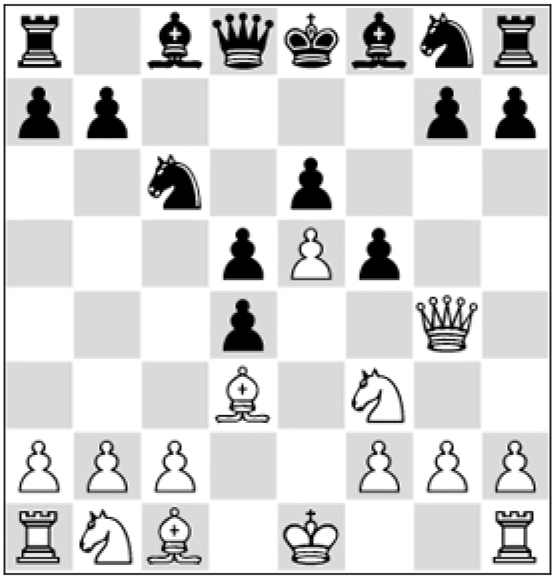
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

Since 1911 I have thought this move a good one, but only after 17 years have I been able to convince the chess world of the correctness of this view.

3…c5 4.♕g4

An innovation of mine, used for the first time in this game. As will soon be seen, it is based on the idea of over-protection.

4…cxd4 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♗d3 f5



White, with a pawn less, is playing to blockade his opponent. He therefore makes use of the strategy known to us from Games 46 and 47: ‘sacrifice for the sake of blockade’. For this plan to work the pawn at e5 has to be over-protected. Then the over-protectors should meet with success almost without effort – such is the claim made by the stratagem of over-protection.

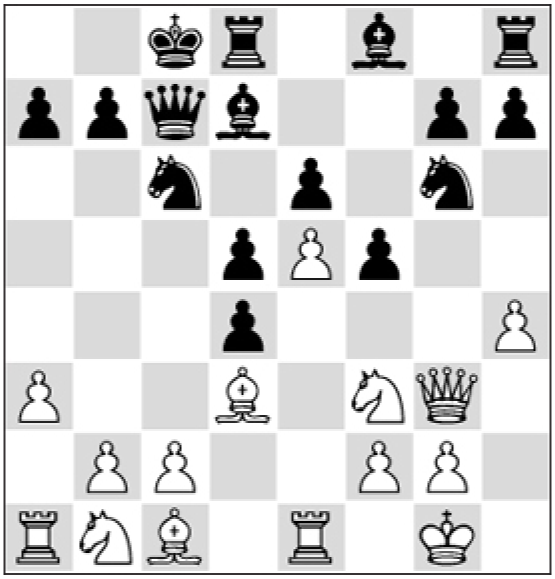
7.♕g3 ♘ge7 8.0-0 ♘g6 9.h4

Poor knight!

9…♕c7 10.♖e1 ♗d7

Here, 10…♗c5 11.h5 ♘f8 should have been played.

11.a3 0-0-0



12.b4

Here White could already win the exchange with 12.h5 ♘ge7 13.♘g5 ♖e8 14.♘f7 ♖g8 15.♘d6+, but afterwards he would have had some difficulties to overcome (the h5-pawn is unprotected and he remains undeveloped). The text move is the logical next step in White’s build-up.

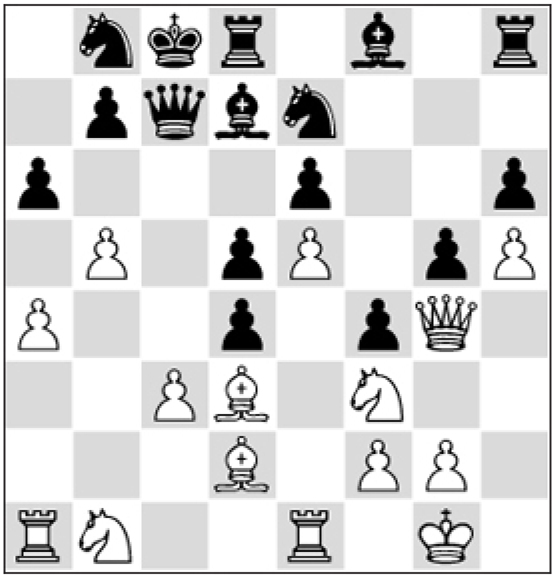
12…a6

Somewhat better was 12…♔b8; e.g., 13.c3! dxc3 14.♘xc3 ♘xb4 15.axb4 ♕xc3 16.♗e3 ♕xd3 17.♗xa7+ ♔c8 18.♖ec1+ ♗c6 19.b5 ♕xb5 20.♘d4, with complications. Incidentally, after 12…♔b8 White could also have continued with 13.♗b2, of course.

13.h5 ♞ge7 14.♝d2 h6 15.a4 g5 16.b5 f4 17.♛g4

The queen is very well placed here.

17…♞b8 18.c3

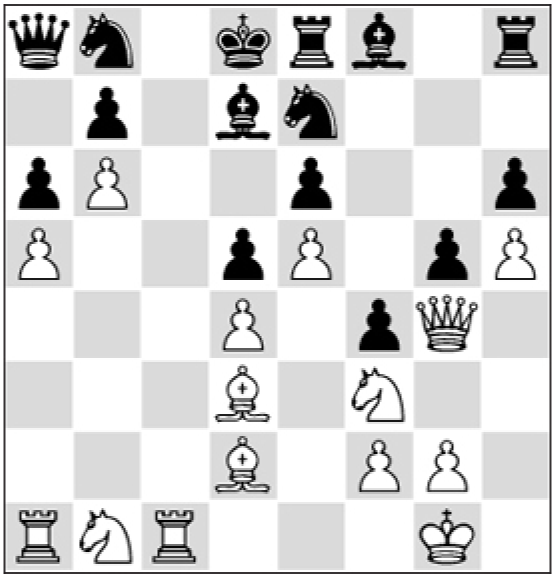


Quite without doing anything to bring it about, the over-protecting rook gains control of the c-file and with it a wide sphere of action – a minor actor is thrust into a great role. Why? And how? The producer willed it so. Who, in our play here, is the all-powerful producer who assigns the roles? Answer: the stratagem of over-protection!

18…♜e8

The only move. Black must now carry out an odd re-grouping if he is to save material.

19.cxd4 ♚d8 20.♜c1 ♛b6 21.a5 ♛a7 22.b6 ♛a8



Such a queen position is elsewhere found only in problems.

23.♖c7 ♘f5 24.♘c3! ♗e7 25.♘xd5 ♘xd4

Or 25…exd5 26.♗xf5, etc.

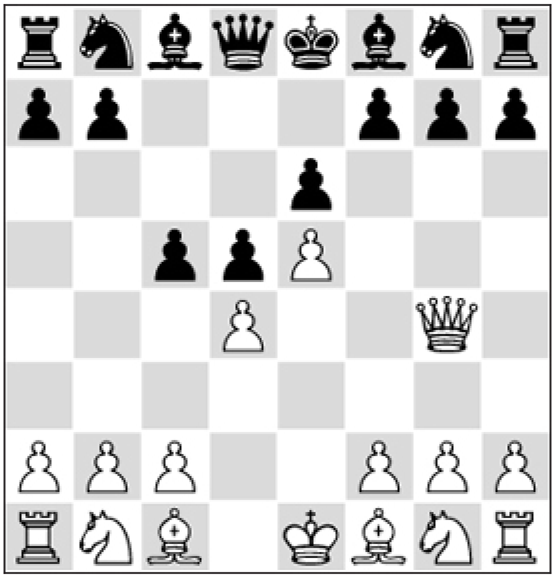
26.♘xd4 exd5 27.♕xd7+

and mate next move by 28.♘e6!.

Game 59

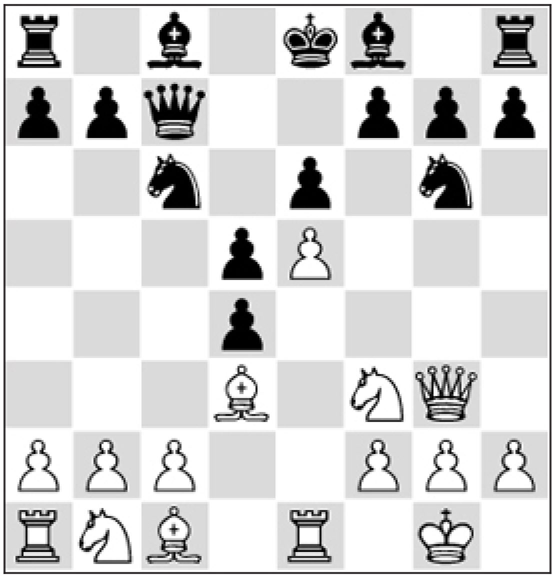
Aron Nimzowitsch
Jeno Szekely
Kecskemet 1927 (1)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♕g4



This line of play, discovered by the author, appeals only to the few – it is not to everyone’s taste to give up a pawn in order afterwards… not to play for the attack!

4…cxd4 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♗d3 ♘ge7 7.0-0 ♘g6 8.♖e1 ♕c7 9.♕g3



We might ask what White has really accomplished by his pawn sacrifice. The answer is simple: he has given excellent support to the e5-square, whose task it is to form the basis of all the upcoming blockading operations, and with that has provided his own game with a spearhead. The idea behind White’s chosen formation becomes clear: the loss of the d4-pawn, the current position tells us, is something we can put behind us, as its principal function is assumed by other pieces. That is to say, the e5-pawn, which is responsible for the entire restraining strategy, is no longer in need of support by a pawn on d4, as it is splendidly protected by the rook, knight, and queen. So White has a pawn less, but in return enjoys an abundance of play with his pawn on e5 as the soul of all future operations. Compare the note to the 6th move in the preceding game.

Incidentally, we regard the second players’ 8th move as feeble; correct was 8…♗e7, which also would have put a stop to h2-h4-h5.

9…♝c5 10.h4

Less an attacking move than an attempt to relieve the e5-pawn.

10…♚f8

Better in any event was 10…♗d7; e.g., 11.h5 ♘ge7 12.♕xg7 0-0-0, although in that case 13.♗g5 would have been unpleasant enough.

11.h5 ♞ge7 12.h6 g6 13.a3!

To provoke a fresh weakening (…a7-a5).

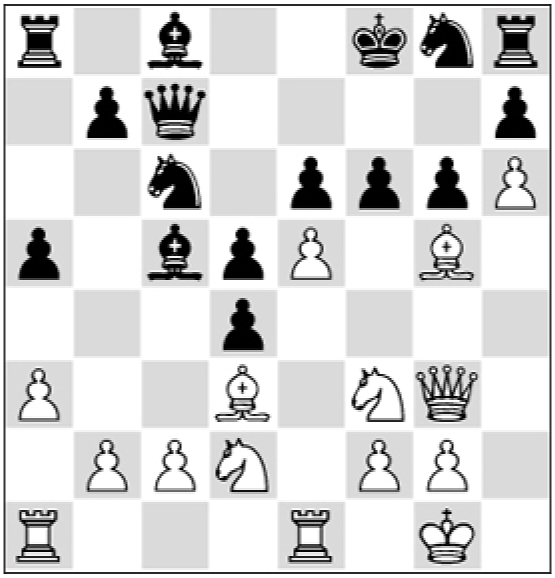
13…a5

Now the square b5 is available to White’s pieces, but permitting b2-b4 would have been still more dangerous.

14.♝g5 ♞g8

Forced, for otherwise there follows 15.♗f6 and ♘g5, etc.

15.♞bd2 f6



It is open to question whether this violent freeing attempt might not have been replaced with a quieter waiting strategy, but, on the other hand, it is natural enough that a player under siege should attempt a few sallies of his own. Trying an active defense is understandable, since against a passive attitude White would have contemplated, *inter alia*, the maneuver ♘d2-f1-h2-g4-f6.

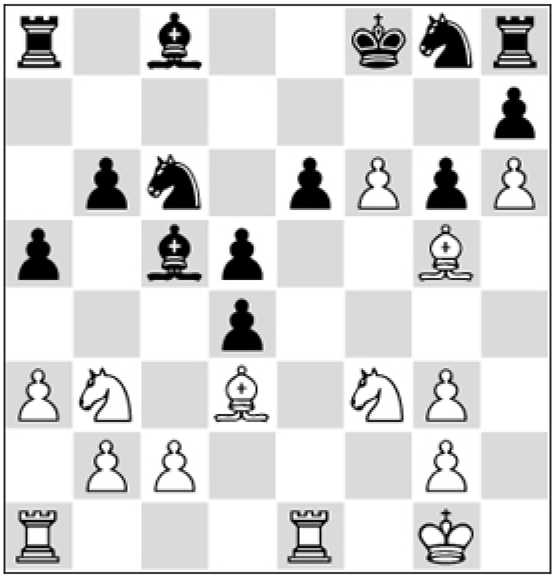
16.♞b3!!

This zwischenzug, meant to provoke …b7-b6 and thereby the weakening of the knight position on c6, is a move of which I am rather proud, frankly speaking. On the immediate 16.exf6 I had feared 16…♗d6! (but not the exchange of queens: 16…♕xg3? 17.fxg3 ♗d6 18.♖e2! ♗xg3 19.♖f1, when Black would be quite helpless, as the knight on g8 is dead and White is threatening to open lines at an opportune moment with f6-f7); e.g., 17.♕h4 e5 18.♗b5 ♗d7, when it was not clear to me how to sacrifice – although with my opponent’s rook and knight out of play just about any sacrifice would have to be successful. That much I was clear about – but sacrifice what, and where? No, I said to myself, first the knight at c6 had to be uprooted and only then would there be a basis for a breakthrough sacrifice, to take place either at d4 or e5!

16…b6! 17.exf6 ♛xg3

If instead 17…♗d6, then 18.♕h4 e5 19.♗b5! (now, with the pawn at b6, this move has a quite different effect than before!) 19…♗d7 20.♗xc6 ♗xc6 21.♗f4! exf4 22.♘bxd4 ♗d7 23.♘g5 and wins.

18.fxg3



18…♝d6

On 18…a4 I would have chosen the following combinative path: 19.♘xc5 bxc5 20.f7! ♔xf7 21.♗b5 ♘ge7 22.♘e5+ ♘xe5 23.♖xe5 and wins.

19.♝b5 ♞a7 20.♞fxd4! ♚f7

Or 20…e5 21.♗c6 ♖b8 22.♘b5, etc.

21.c4! e5 22.cxd5 exd4 23.♝e8+ ♚f8 24.f7

The rest is silence – 24…♘e7 25.♗f6.

24…♝f5 25.♞xd4 ♝c5 26.♜ad1 ♞b5 27.fxg8♛+ ♜xg8 28.♝xb5 ♚f7 29.d6

Black resigned. In this game, too, the over-protectors carried off the palm.

Game 60

Efim Bogoljubow
Aron Nimzowitsch
St Petersburg 1913/14

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.e5 ♞fd7 5.♛g4

White chooses the Gledhill Variation.

5…c5 6.♞f3 a6

I prudently avoided a variation unfamiliar to me: 6…cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5 8.♕g3.

7.dxc5 ♛c7 8.♛g3 ♞xc5 9.♝d3 g6 10.♝f4

He is playing – without being aware of it, to be sure, for at that time the principle had not yet been discovered – my stratagem of over-protection!

10…♞c6 11.0-0 ♞e7

Temporizing. On 11…♗g7 and 12…0-0 the over-protectors would have become effective for an attack, e.g., with ♖e1, ♕h4, and ♗h6, etc.

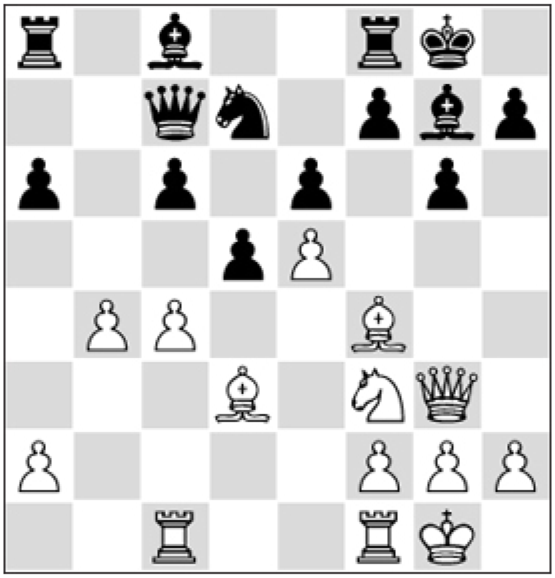
12.♜ac1!

An ingenious preventive measure against the intended 12…♘xd3 followed by …♘f5.

12…♝g7 13.b4!

To safeguard the bishop once and for all. True, it does weaken the queenside somewhat.

13…♞d7 14.♞e2 0-0 15.♞ed4 ♞c6 16.♞xc6 bxc6 17.c4



If now the obvious 17…♕b8, then 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.a3 and White has a free hand for his kingside play; e.g., 19…♗b7 20.h4 h5 21.♖ce1 (over-protection), when White is threatening both 22.♘d4 with ♘xe6 next, and 22.♕h3 followed by g2-g4. Notice the nonchalant elegance by which the over-protectors suddenly became active.

But now we are faced with the following question: was the action introduced by 17.c4, for safeguarding and relieving the pressure on his queenside – for after 17.c4 ♕b8 18.cxd5, etc., the white queenside was indeed given relief – really necessary? Might not have White considered burning all his bridges behind him, namely, by 17.♖fe1? The sequel could be 17…a5 18.c3 axb4 19.cxb4 ♕b6 (19…♖xa2? 20.♘d4!) 20.h4 ♕xb4 21.h5. If now 21…♖xa2 22.hxg6 fxg6, then 23.♗e3. However, after the exchange sacrifice 23… ♖xf3! 24.gxf3 ♘xe5 25.♗c5 ♕h4! Black might have been able to win after all. Bogoljubow therefore did well to forgo a reckless prosecution of the kingside attack.

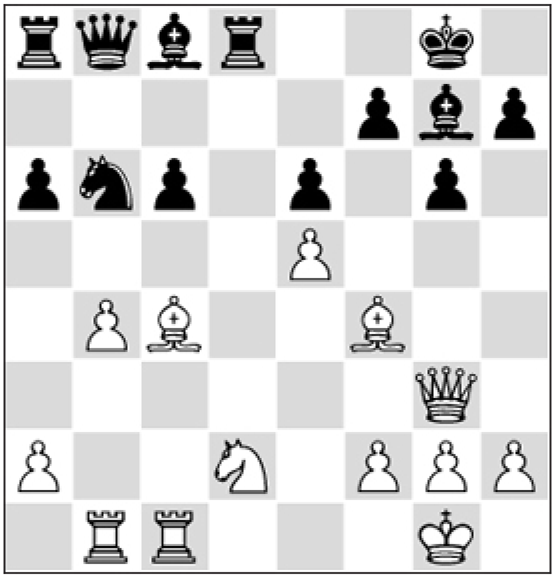
17…dxc4!!

A heroic measure that culminates in a pawn sacrifice. What follows now is a mighty duel between… the two players? No, between centralization and over-protection; Lady Over-Protection gets the worst of it here.

18.♗xc4 ♕b8 19.♖b1 ♘b6 20.♘d2

An anti-over-protection move!

20…♜d8 21.♜fc1



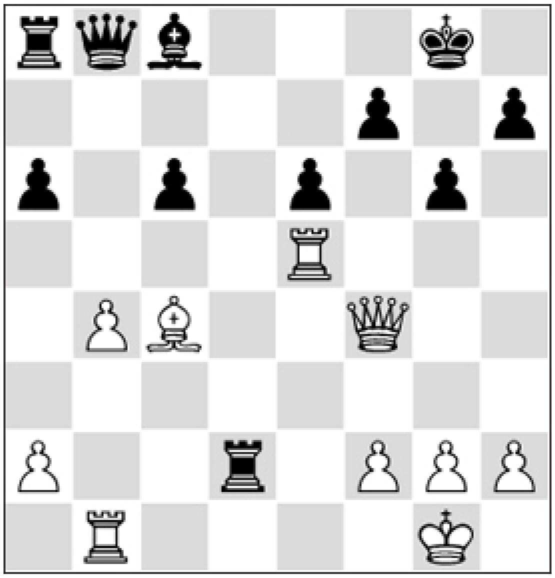
21…♞d5!

Centralization! On 22.♗xd5 the rook should recapture; 22…♖xd5 23.♖xc6 ♗b7 24.♖d6 and now 24…♕c7, threatening 25…♕c2. The game would then be nearly even. Possible also was the continuation 23…♗xe5 (instead of 23…♗b7); e.g., 24.♗xe5 (in the case of 24.♖xc8+, Black can play …♕c2 later on) 24…♕xe5 25.♕xe5 ♖xe5 26.♘c4 ♖e2 27.♘b6 ♗b7 28.♖c7 ♖b8 29.♘d7 ♖d8 30.♖xb7 ♖d2, with equality.

22.♜e1?

Correct was 22.♗xd5, as shown in the previous note. After the text move White goes down mightily.

22…♞xf4 23.♛xf4 ♝xe5! 24.♜xe5 ♜xd2



25.♕g5?

Resistance was still possible with 25.♕xd2 ♕xe5 26.♕d8+.

25…♕d6 26.♖be1 ♕d4

Ongoing centralization.

27.♗f1 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1 f6 29.♕e3 fxe5

White resigned.

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Part IV

The Isolated Queen Pawn and the Two Hanging Pawns; the Two Bishops

Let us consider the following pawn skeleton: **White's pawns at a2, b2, d4, f2, g2, h2**; and **Black's pawns at a7, b7, e6, f7, g7, h7**. The isolated pawn at d4, in spite of its static weakness, is invested with a certain dynamic power. It is essential at this point to make a precise distinction between 'statics' and 'dynamics' if the matter is to be understood.

Static weaknesses manifest themselves in the endgame, and in two ways: first, the d4-pawn is in need of support; and, second, the weakness of the adjacent squares becomes apparent (e.g., the black king threatens to infiltrate through d5 to c4 or e4). On the dynamic side of the ledger, in addition to the d-pawn's lust to expand (d4-d5!) there is the following plan: White lets his isolated pawn remain fixed where it is, to be sure, but because of this pawn he possesses the *dynamically most valuable points* c5 and e5.

There are weapons of war that twenty years ago might have instilled fear in all chess combatants, but which today are no more than harmless playthings. Defensive technique has made good progress, so that in our time the 'dynamic power of the isolated pawn' has become just such a plaything, and we find it hard to understand how anyone could have been put to flight by such a weapon.

The innocuousness of the aforementioned dynamic is shown by the following opening moves:

I. **Erich Cohn-Nimzowitsch**, Karlsbad 1911: **1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 ♗d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.a3 cxd4! 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♘c6 10.♘c3 b6 11.♗g5 ♗b7 12.♕e2 h6! 13.♗e3 ♘e7 14.♘e5** An attempt to realize the dynamic power of the Isolani, a try that is easily refuted. **14...♘ed5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♕h5 ♗xe5 17.♕xe5 ♘f6**

18.♜fe1 ♝d5 19.♝d3 ♜c8 20.♜ac1 ♞g4 21.♛g3 ♞xe3 22.fxe3 ♛d7 The pawn-pair at d4 and e3 hardly impresses. **23.♝a6 ♜xc1 24.♜xc1 ♛a4 25.♝f1 ♛b3 26.♛f2 f5 27.♛d2 ♜f7 28.♛c3 ♛a4 29.g3 ♚h7 30.♝g2 ♛b5 31.♝xd5 exd5** and Black 'massaged' the e-pawn and later the g-pawn as well (as White had to play h2-h4) for 70 (!) moves and won. The concluding phase is given in Part V.

II. **Nimzowitsch-Gemzøe**, Copenhagen 1922: **1.e3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 ♞f6 4.d4 c5 5.♞c3 ♞c6 6.♝e2 ♝e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.dxc5 ♝xc5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.b3 ♝e6 11.♝b2 ♜c8 12.♜c1 ♛e7 13.♞b5 ♜fd8 14.♞fd4 a6 15.♞xc6 ♜xc6 16.♞d4 ♜c7 17.♛d3 ♜dc8 18.♞f5 ♛d8 19.♜fd1 ♝f8 20.♜xc7 ♜xc7 21.♞g3!** Note the minimal value of the 'dynamic' trumps, namely, the black c-file. In the foreground of events we notice rather the statically weak Isolani. It is thanks to the *slowness* of White's knight maneuver that the facts just described become especially accentuated. **21…♝e7 22.♝f3 ♜d7 23.♞e2 ♞e4** This 'dynamic' joy-ride will be shown to be of only brief duration. **24.♞f4 ♝f6** What else? **25.♞xe6 fxe6 26.♝xe4 ♝xb2 27.♝xh7+**, with White winning after a protracted endgame.

We now proceed to an investigation of the next weapon on the agenda of the armed services, that is, the two hanging pawns. **White: pawns at a2, b2, e3, f2, g2, h2**; **Black: pawns at a7, c5, d5, f7, g7, h7**. This weapon, in contrast to the Isolani, does not seem at all outdated. Only, one must guard against over-emphasizing its dynamic value – many tournament games have gone onto the rocks through an excessively forceful advance (…d5-d4, with an overweening desire to break through). Just as misguided, to be sure, is to forsake any initiative in striving for a safe position; we mean here …c5-c4, when the hanging pawns at d5 and c4 certainly appear to be protected, but they have forfeited all their offensive punch. (I call this: withdrawing into a blockaded 'security'.) The truth probably lies in a fusion of 'dynamics' and 'statics': the blockaded security, with a dash of initiative (e.g., play against the b2-pawn, as in Game 65) – that ought to be the correct strategy!

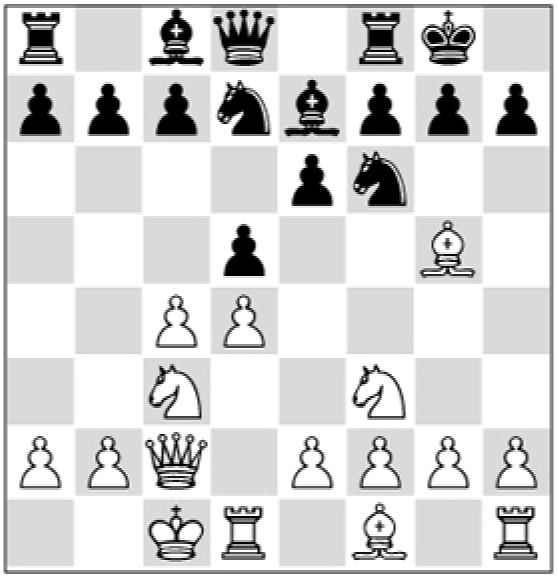
Compare these observations with my ruminations on the subject in *My System*. The great 'infant mortality' of the hanging pawns must not tempt us into hasty – and somewhat dubious – judgments. The high mortality rate just referred to can be greatly reduced by exercising a little care. See, for example, my débâcle against Rubinstein at Gothenburg, 1920: **Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch**: **1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.♘f3 ♝b7 4.g3 ♝b4+ 5.♝d2 ♝xd2+ 6.♕xd2 ♘e7 7.♘c3 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♝g2 c5 10.dxc5 bxc5 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♖fd1 0-0 13.♘e1 ♘b6 14.♘d3 ♕d6 15.♘f4 ♕f6?** The stumble. 15…♕e5 was essential, as the next note demonstrates. **16.b3** Now 16…♖fd8 does not work because of the reply 17.e4, and if 17…d4, then 18.e5!, winning the bishop on b7. There followed, hence: **16…c4** The sequel was: **17.bxc4 ♘xc4 18.♕d4 ♕xd4 19.♖xd4 ♘b6 20.♘cxd5** and Rubinstein, after the ensuing exchanges of the minor pieces, won the rook ending in classic style.

The power of the two bishops is illustrated in two games, of which the encounter with Goldstein would seem to be quite significant. A third two-bishop game can be seen in Game 63.

Game 61

Aron Nimzowitsch
Ernst Jacobsen
Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♝e7 5.♝g5 0-0 6.♕c2 ♘bd7 7.0-0-0



The individual moves ♕c2 and 0-0-0 are familiar to us, of course, and yet White’s scheme, taken as a whole, involves a fresh nuance; cf. the note to move 9.

7…c5 8.dxc5 ♘xc5 9.e3

The win of a pawn that is possible here would be bad for White. But now one would expect 9…♕a5, with a fairly easy attacking development against White’s queenside castling, which comes across as somewhat casual and reckless. This attack has often led to a win, for instance in the classic game **Rotlevi-Teichmann** (Karlsbad 1911): **1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 0-0 7.♕c2 c5 8.0-0-0 ♕a5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♘xc5 11.♘d4 ♗e6 12.♔b1 ♖ac8 13.♗d3 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗f5 ♖fd8**, when Black had the more comfortable game.

But the transposition of moves chosen enables me to delay cxd5, a move that is pleasant only for Black, and with this nuance White’s chances are not inconsiderably enhanced.

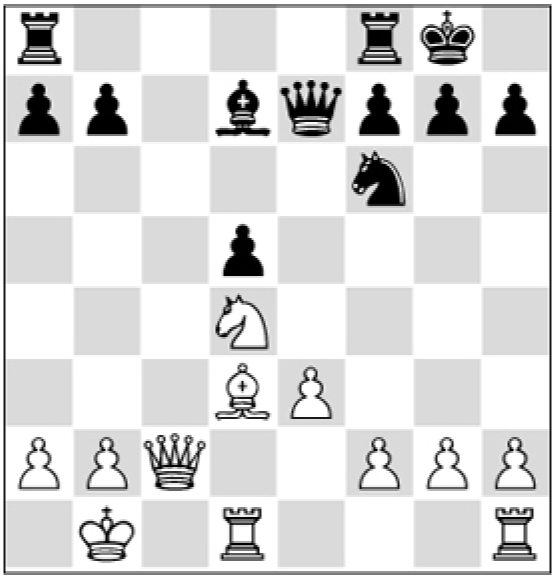
9…♗d7

If 9…♕a5, then, first, 10.♔b1.

10.♔b1 ♘fe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4?

Correct was 11…dxe4.

12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗d3 ♘f6 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♘d4

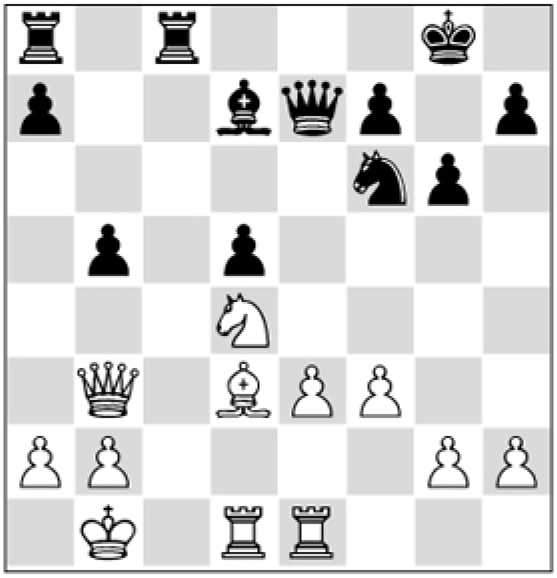


Now we have it, the Isolani!

15…♖fc8 16.♕b3 b5 17.f3

In order to play 18.g4. White's centralized build-up can tolerate the slight weakness on e3.

17…g6 18.♖he1



18…b4

Making it possible for his opponent to launch a sortie that leads to temporary control of the c-file; better therefore was 18…♖ab8.

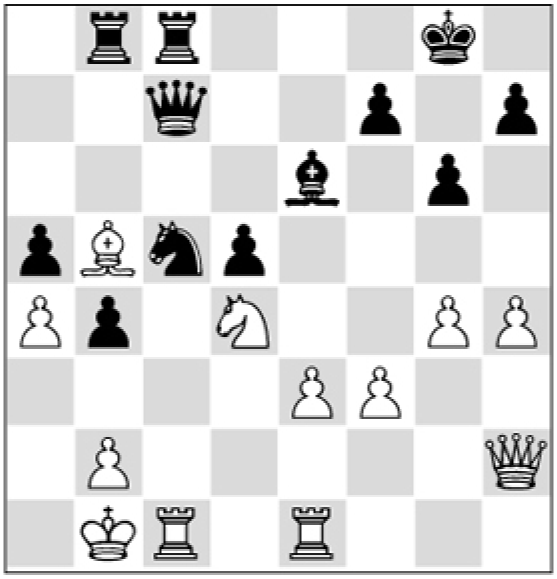
19.♗a6! ♖cb8 20.g4 ♖b6 21.♗f1 ♗e6

Agreeable to White, for now the line of attack from e7 to e3 is interrupted; but the isolated pawn was already in need of direct protection.

22.♖c1 a5 23.a4! ♘d7 24.♗b5 ♘c5 25.♕c2 ♖c8 26.h4 ♖bb8 27.♕h2

Here, 27.♘c6 would have won the exchange on the spot.

27…♕c7



28.♛xc7?

White was the stronger on the diagonals: occupation of the diagonal outpost at f4 would have won easily; e.g., 28.♕f4 ♕xf4 29.exf4 and f4-f5 cannot be prevented.

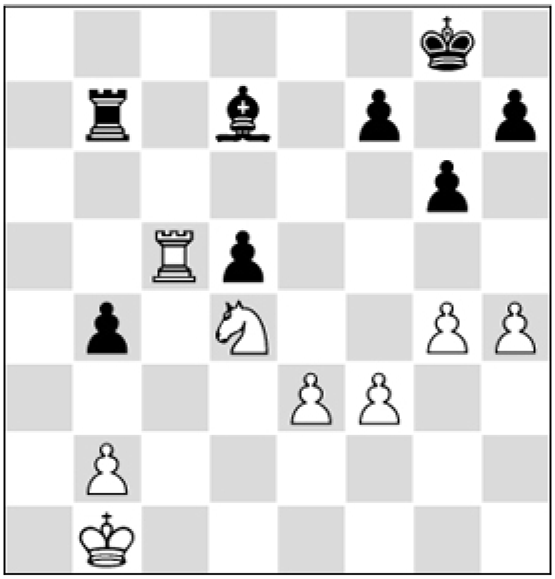
28…♜xc7 29.♞c6 ♜xb5?

A serious error; 29…♖xc6 was indicated. After 30.♗xc6 ♘d3 31.♗b5 ♘xe1 32.♖xe1 f5 33.g5 ♖c8 34.♖c1 ♔f7 35.♖xc8 ♗xc8 36.♔c2 ♔e6 37.♔d3 ♔e5 38.f4+ ♔d6 39.♔d4 White would not have been able to achieve anything. With the f-pawn at f3 instead of f4 White could have made a few more attempts to win, which, however, would eventually fail due to the weakness of his own a4-pawn. That the position of Black's king on d6 does not necessarily neutralize the enemy king at d4 is a fact we would like to demonstrate with an endgame position quite similar to the game at hand. **White: king at d4, bishop at e8, pawns on b4, e3, f3, g5, h4**; **Black: king at d6, bishop at e6, pawns on b6, d5, f5, g6, h7**. Play continued: 1.h5 gxh5 2.♗xh5 ♗g8 3.♗e8 ♗e6 4.♗b5 ♗f7 5.♗d3 ♗e6 6.e4 fxe4 7.fxe4 dxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗g8 9.♗d3 and the black king must give way. This is proof of what we said in the preliminary discussion about the complex of weak squares surrounding the isolated pawn (here, c5 and especially e5). We now return to the game.

30.axb5 ♞d3 31.♞xa5! ♜a7 32.♞c6 ♜b7

33…♗d7 34.♖d1 leads to the game continuation.

33.♘d4 ♘xe1 34.♖xe1 ♗d7 35.♖c1 ♗xb5 36.♖c5 ♗d7



A pawn will be lost in any case.

37.♖xd5 ♔f8 38.♔c2 b3+ 39.♔c3 ♔e7 40.h5 ♗e6 41.♖c5 ♔d6 42.♖c6+ ♔d7 43.hxg6 hxg6 44.♘xe6 fxe6 45.♖c5 ♔d6 46.♖g5 ♖g7 47.f4 ♖g8 48.♔xb3 ♔e7 49.♔c4 ♖c8+ 50.♖c5 ♖h8 51.♖c7+ ♔f6 52.e4 g5 53.e5+ ♔g6 54.f5+ exf5 55.♖c6+ ♔g7 56.gxf5 ♖h2 57.b4 ♖c2+ 58.♔d5 ♖xc6 59.♔xc6 g4 60.e6 g3 61.e7 g2 62.e8♕ g1♕ 63.♕g6+

Black resigned.

Game 62

Aron Nimzowitsch
Professor Kudriavtsev
and Dr. Landau
Dorpat 1910 (played simultaneously with three other consultation games)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 exd5?

Much better is 5…♘xd5.

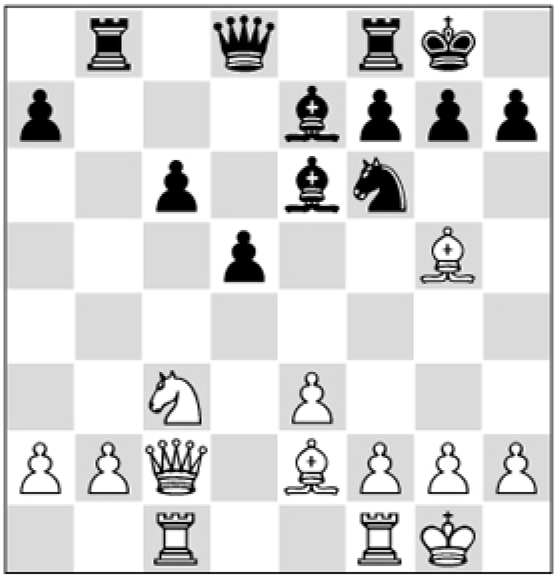
6.♗g5 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♗e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.♘xc6

The ‘isolated pawn pair’ on c6 and d5 is soon revealed to be weak.

10…bxc6 11.0-0 ♗e6

This development of the bishop can be considered valid only as possible preparation for …c6-c5; otherwise the immediate 11…♗d7 unquestionably deserved preference.

12.♖c1 ♖b8 13.♕c2



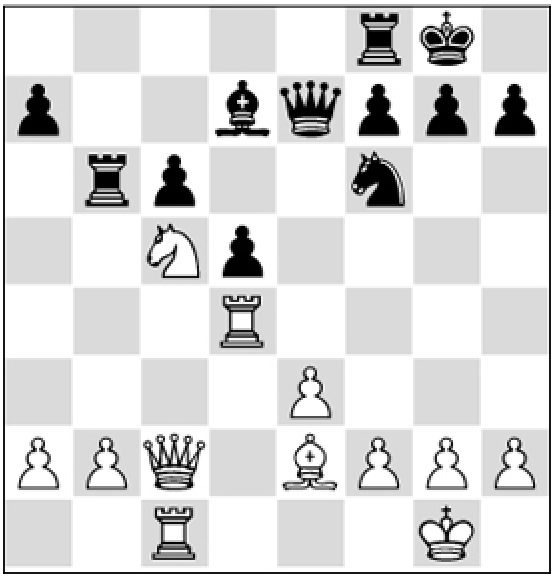
13…♗d7

Was 13…c5 really so hopeless? Let’s see: 14.♖fd1 ♕a5 15.♗f3 ♖fd8 16.b3 c4, or 16.♗xf6 (instead of 16.b3) 16…♗xf6 17.♗xd5 ♗xc3 18.♗xe6 ♗xb2, with equality. The fact that he misses this chance to obtain the hanging pawns (c5 and d5), preferring instead to stifle his pawn pair at c6 and d5 to the point of helplessness, has to be considered the decisive mistake.

14.♖fd1 ♘e8 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘a4 ♘f6

A better defense was offered by 16…♘c7; e.g., 17.♘c5 ♗e8, then …♘e6.

17.♘c5 ♖b6 18.♖d4



The blockade proceeds.

Incidentally, the pawn at a7 is also difficult to defend.

18…♖fb8 19.b3 ♗e8 20.♗d3 h6 21.♕c3

An over-protection of d4 takes place.

21…♗d7 22.♖a4 ♖a8 23.♕d4 ♘e8 24.♖a5 ♘c7 25.♕a4 ♘b5 26.♗xb5 cxb5 27.♕d4

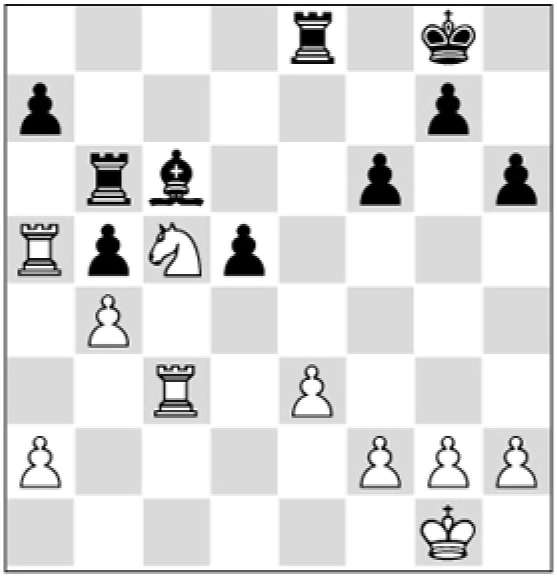
Now the d-pawn is again isolated.

27…♗c6 28.b4 ♖ab8 29.♘b3 f6 30.♕c5! ♕xc5 31.♘xc5 ♖a8 32.♖c3

The a-pawn is lost.

32…♖e8!

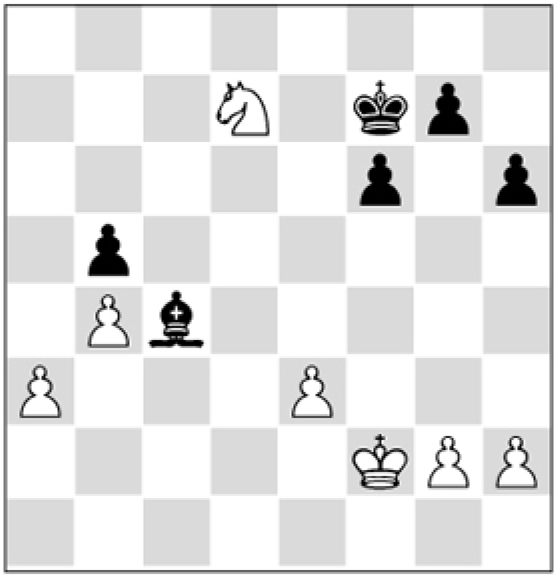
Best: they seek the open play that so far has been so painfully lacking.



33.♖xa7 d4 34.♖d3 dxe3 35.♖xe3 ♖xe3 36.fxe3 ♗d5 37.a3 ♗c4 38.♔f2 ♖d6 39.♖d7

The pressure by the white pieces, carried over from the period of the blockade, exerts its paralysing influence on Black’s game even now, when the board is more open.

39…♖xd7 40.♘xd7 ♔f7

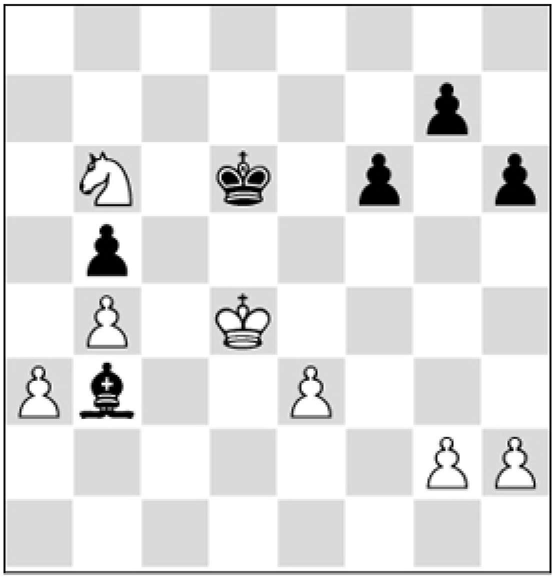


Now the issue is strictly about the central points. White, it appears, cannot prevent the black king from assuming a central position, either at d5 or e5. But that would mean a victory of the opening-up idea over the idea of the blockade.

41.♘b6!

At the risk of losing the knight! But White has considered the move very carefully.

41…♝b3 42.♔f3 ♚e6 43.♔e4 ♚d6 44.♔d4



Now, if 44…♚c6, the simple 45.♘c8 would follow, when the knight would have two ways to escape (via a7 or e7), so nothing bad could happen to it.

44…♝e6 45.a4 ♚c6 46.a5 h5 47.e4 f5 48.exf5

Anything wins at this point, even 48.♔e5; e.g., 48…fxe4 49.♔xe6 e3 50.♘d7 e2 51.♘e5+, etc.

48…♝xf5 49.♘d5 ♚b7 50.♔c5

and White won in a few moves.

The isolated pawn pair did not acquit itself well. White’s blockade held all the way to the end, even after his opponent opened up the position. The Isolani therefore played a rather humiliating role in this game.

Game 63

Orla Krause
Aron Nimzowitsch
Correspondence game 1924/25

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4

Worth considering was 6…g6.

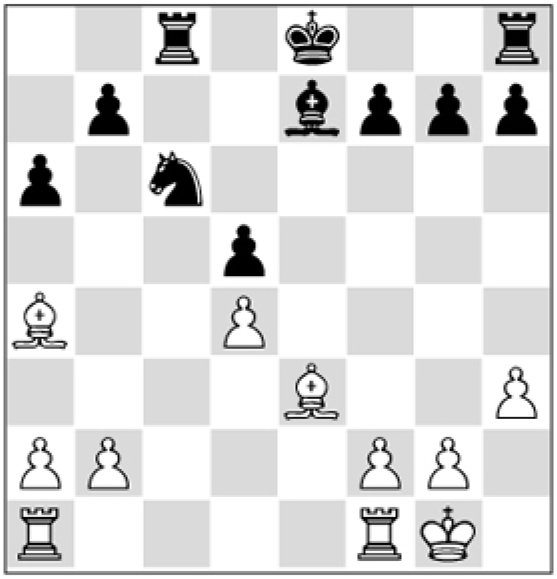
7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♗b5!

This is better than the attempt at attack with 8.♕b3; e.g., 8…♗xf3 9.gxf3 e6! – recommended by Dr. Krause – 10.♕xb7 ♘xd4 11.♗b5+ ♘xb5 12.♕c6+ ♔e7 13.♕xb5 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♕d5 and Black stands well. Not bad, too, incidentally, after 8.♕b3 ♗xf3 9.gxf3, is the simple continuation 9…♘b6; e.g., 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♕d1 e5.

8…♖c8 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 e6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♘xd5

Very strong at this point, and Black has to summon up the most subtle counterplay just to hold the balance. And yet, in the strategic-theoretical sense the text move can only be accounted as an admission that all this talk about the supposed dynamic power of the Isolani is just that – mere talk. No, sober reality shows us a different picture: the possessor of the Isolani will be happy if he can conceal its weakness.

12…♕xd5 13.♕xd5 exd5 14.♗e3 a6 15.♗a4



15…♗d6

After this move Black's difficulties become enormous. Castling – but what master thinks of castling in an endgame? – would in any case have led to easier play; e.g., 15…0-0 16.♗b3 ♖cd8! 17.♖ac1 ♘a5

18.♖c2 ♘xb3 19.axb3 ♗d6 20.♖fc1, when Black need not be concerned about the white c-file.

16.♝b3 ♞e7 17.♝d2!

Now White threatens the doubling of the rooks on the e-file. Black’s need to protect his d-pawn has a crippling effect on his game, and White, with his two bishops, has a fine, free game.

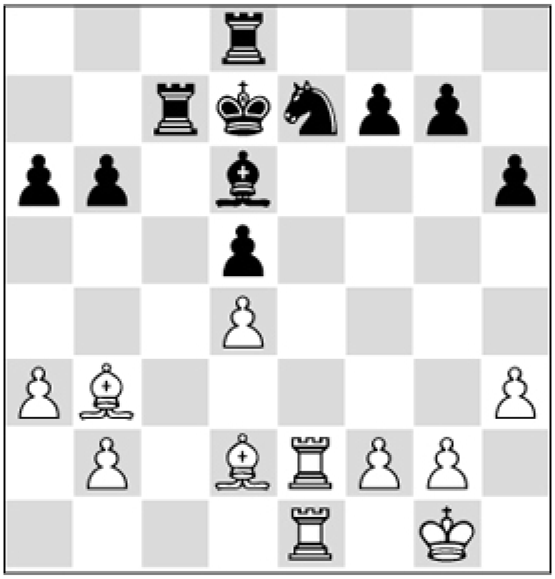
17…b6!!

The start of a deep-laid defensive maneuver.

18.♜ae1 ♚d7 19.♜e2 h6! 20.♜fe1 ♜hd8 21.a3

22.♗b4 is already threatened.

21…♜c7!



Black’s plan of defense now becomes comprehensible. He wants to have his rooks on d8 and c7, so …b7-b6 had to be played (against ♗a5). But …h7-h6 was also necessary, for otherwise White, with ♗g5, could force the loosening …f7-f6. The hole at e6 would then have been unbearable.

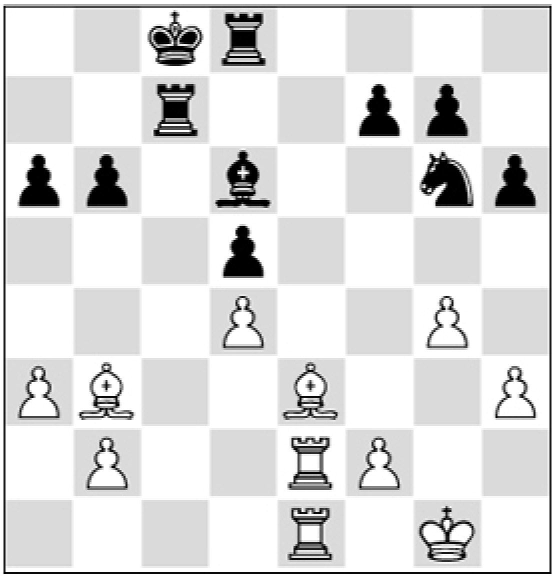
22.g4

Or 22.♗b4? ♗xb4 and 23…♔d6.

22…♚c8

With the defensive threat 23…♘c6 24.♗e3 ♗f8!, when Black has freed his position.

23.♗e3! ♘g6!



Black cannot delay in freeing himself – the strengthening of White’s game with f2-f4-f5 has to be forestalled by means of prophylaxis.

24.♗xd5 ♘f4

Forcing equalization. There followed:

25.♗xf4 ♗xf4 26.♖e8 ♖c1 27.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 28.♔f1 ♖xe1+ 29.♔xe1 ♗c1 30.b3 ♗xa3 31.♗xf7 ♗b2 32.d5 ♔e7 33.♗e6 ♔d6 ½-½

The Isolani at d4 was a partial success in this game, but only in a general sense. Theoretically speaking, the course of this game is more or less equivalent to a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of the isolated pawn: instead of its supposed dynamic strength we see an anxious concealment of its static weakness!

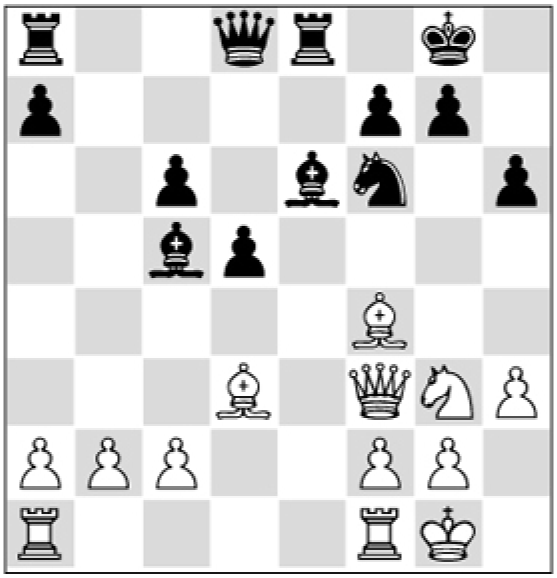
Dr. Krause, incidentally, planned and conducted his game splendidly. The fact that nothing is to be gained from the Isolani is clearly not his fault.

Game 64

Aron Nimzowitsch
David Janowsky
Karlsbad 1907 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗b4 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♗d3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 c6 11.♘e2 ♗c5 12.♘g3 h6 13.♗f4 ♖e8 14.h3

♝e6 15.♛f3



An opening that is easy to understand. The position is just about level: White has somewhat more influence in the center than his opponent, but the second player has a stronger pawn center.

15…♝d6 16.♜ad1

16.♖fd1 deserved preference.

16…♝xf4 17.♛xf4 ♛b8 18.♛a4

Youthful exuberance – the pawn sacrifice can hardly be completely sound.

18…♛c7

Better was 18…♕xb2 19.♕xc6 ♕xa2.

19.c4 ♜ab8 20.b3 a5 21.cxd5 ♝xd5

The isolated queen’s pawn primps a little before making her appearance.

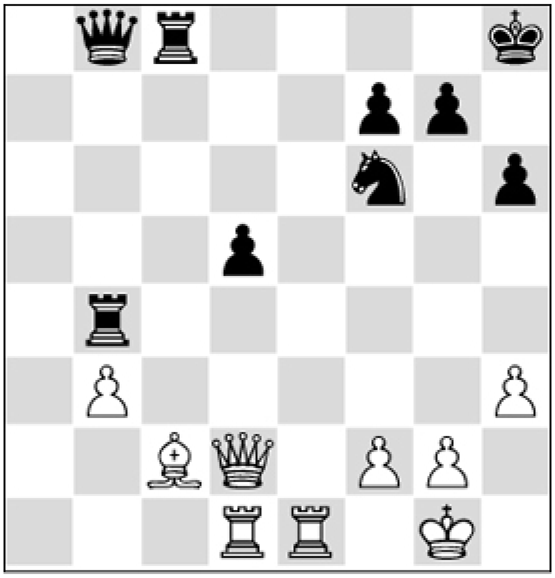
22.♜fe1 ♜ed8 23.♛a3 ♜b4 24.♛b2 a4 25.♞f5!

Threatening 26.♘xh6+.

25…♛f4 26.♞e7+ ♚h8 27.♞xd5 cxd5

Now she has arrived! Better late than never, Countess Isolani!

28.♛c3 axb3 29.axb3 ♛b8 30.♝c2 ♜c8 31.♛d2



The white Isolani is troublesome insofar as it is the unpleasant duty of the bishop to have to protect it. This, however, is easy to ‘straighten out’.

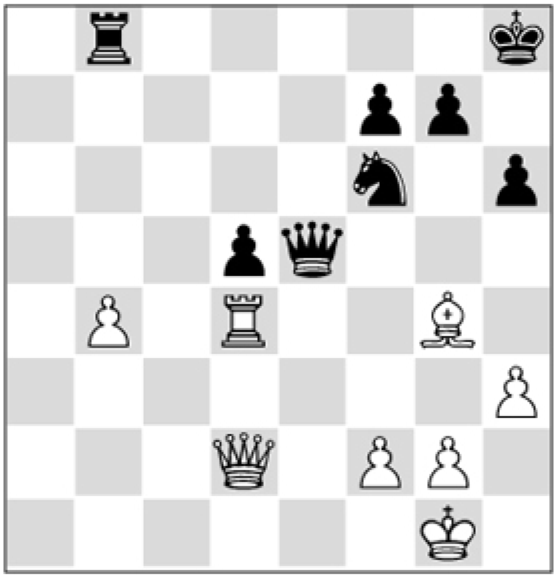
31…♕d6 32.♖a1 ♖b7 33.♖a4 ♖bc7 34.♗f5 ♖b8 35.♖d4 ♖e7

Or 35…♖xb3? 36.♖xd5!.

36.♖xe7 ♕xe7 37.b4

Now White has at least as good a game as his opponent.

37…♕e5 38.♗g4



38…♖a8

Disdaining the draw that could be had by 38…♘xg4.

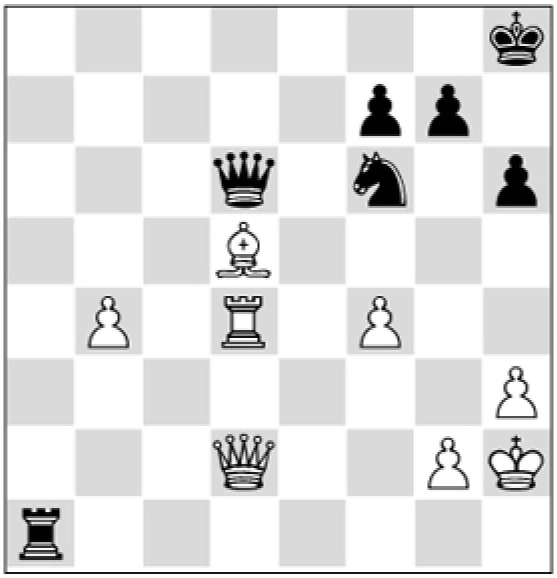
39.f4 ♜a1+ 40.♚h2 ♛c7

Better was 40…♕b8; e.g., 41.♗f3 ♖b1.

41.♝f3

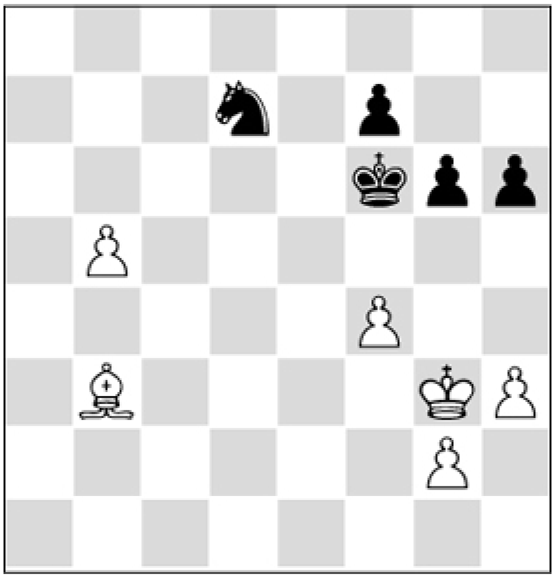
Blockade, followed by annihilation – this was the fate of the isolated queen’s pawn in this game.

41…♛d6 42.♝xd5



The ‘pedagogical’ interest in this struggle is not exhausted by this capture: we should observe, first of all, how White’s maneuvers continue to revolve around the d4-square – the important blockade point over the lifetime of the Isolani.

42…♛e7 43.♝f3 g6 44.♛c3 ♜b1 45.♜c4 ♚g7 46.♛e5 ♜e1 47.♛xe7 ♜xe7 48.b5 ♜e6 49.♜c6 ♞d7 50.♝d5 ♜f6 51.♚g3 ♞b6 52.♝b3 ♞d7 53.♜xf6 ♚xf6



The upshot of White's play is now clear: Black could not avoid the simplifying exchange.

54.♔f3 ♚e7 55.♔e3 f6 56.♔d4 ♚d6

How curious! If we imagine the Isolani still with us, on d5, the respective king positions would be considered a typical alignment *in the case of the isolated pawn*, a grouping of kings and pawn whose aim is to conquer – or, for the second player, to defend – the neighboring square complex, here the points e5 and c5. What does it matter if the Isolani has already disappeared from the scene? It retains an influence on the events of the game nonetheless; indeed, its shadow directs the entire game, and the pieces – one's own as well as the enemy's – march up to it and group themselves around it and seek to attack or protect it, just as though it still really existed on the board. We have had opportunity, in Game 36, to observe a quite similar picture of a no-longer-present combat unit clearly manifesting itself *after* its disappearance from the board.

57.♗d1 ♞b6 58.♗f3 ♞c8 59.h4 ♞e7 60.♗e4 g5

Now White takes over the 'adjacent' square e5, just as if this were a *real* and not imaginary isolated-pawn position. What do we learn from this 'transcendental' case? Well, the Isolani is not only a pawn but also a point of weakness. With the disappearance of the d5-pawn the play against the d5-square – and the adjacent square weaknesses – is not in the least bit exhausted; rather, matters now proceed calmly and undisturbed! The rest needs no commentary.

61.fxg5 fxg5 62.hxg5 hxg5 63.b6 g4 64.b7 ♚c7 65.♚e5 g3 66.♚f4 ♞g8 67.♚xg3 ♞f6 68.♝f3 ♞d7 69.♚f4 ♚d6 70.♚f5 ♚e7 71.♝c6 ♞b8 72.♝b5

1-0

Game 65

Akiba Rubinstein
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1907 (2)

1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♞c3 ♞c6 6.♝f4

At that time the refutation 6.g3 was not yet known.

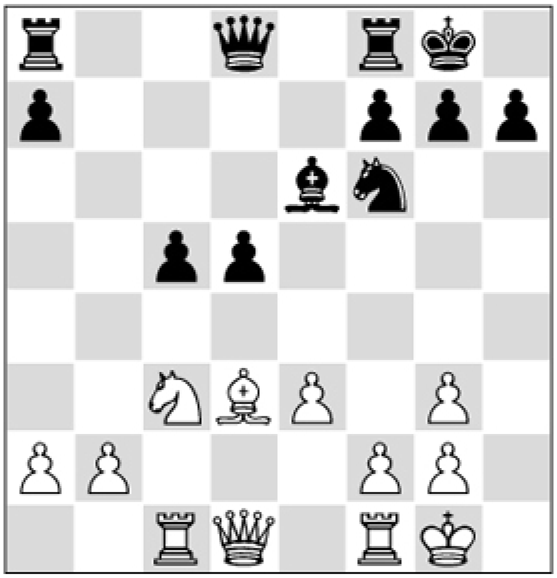
6…cxd4 7.♞xd4 ♝b4 8.e3 ♞f6 9.♞xc6 bxc6 10.♝d3 0-0 11.0-0 ♝d6!

Black does not of course intend to let himself fall into his opponent’s clutches as in Game 62; instead, he prepares …c6-c5.

12.♝g3

12.♗g5 would be rendered pointless by a powerful centralizing action; e.g., 12…♖b8 13.b3 (13.♕c2? ♗xh2+) 13…♗e5! 14.♖c1 ♕d6.

12…♝xg3 13.hxg3 c5 14.♜c1 ♝e6



15.♛a4

An attempt to blast the position open with 15.e4 would only result in equality after 15…dxe4 16.♘xe4 c4! 17.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18.♗xc4

♕xb2.

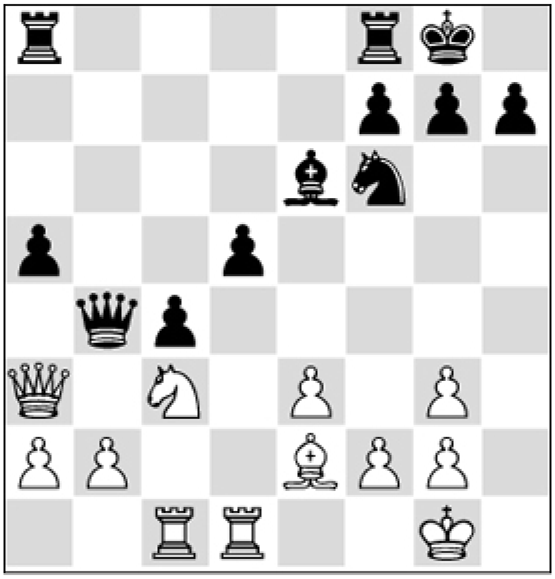
15…♛b6

At that time I was already clear on the fact that the correct plan had to be based on …c5-c4 and not …d5-d4, for …d5-d4, with its desire to break through, would only mean carrying matters too far and therefore is to be reproved. Less dynamic would be better here: 15…c4, which offers a certain security (our 'blockaded security') and makes possible the evolvement of a limited but prudent initiative (cf. the preliminary note).

16.♕a3

He 'forces' …c5-c4, for at that time this move was sill thought to be compromising.

16…c4! 17.♗e2 a5 18.♖fd1 ♛b4



A minor initiative!

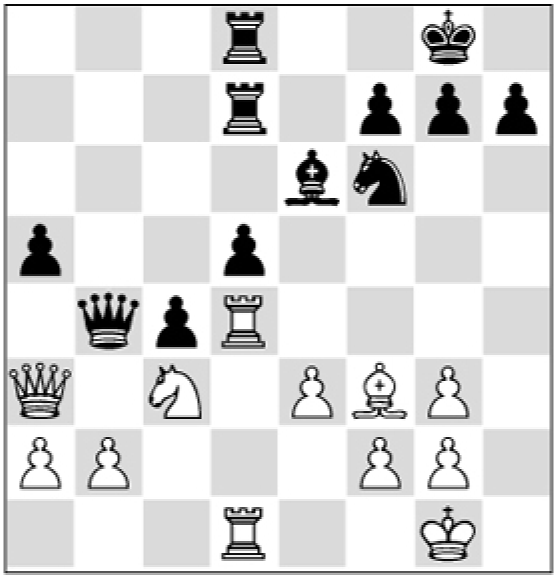
19.♖d4

White need not fear the doubling of his a-pawns.

19…♜fd8

In the event of 19…♕xa3, White plays 20.bxa3 ♖ab8 (else 21.♖b1) 21.♗f3 ♖fd8 22.♖cd1, etc.

20.♖cd1 ♜d7 21.♗f3 ♜ad8



This position – drawn tight, wonderfully economical, and with its ideal placement of all the pieces – reminds us of a piece of Greek art. Nothing may any longer be altered in this position, resplendent in its perfection. The continuation 22.♔f1 ♔f8 23.♔g1 ♔g8, etc., with a draw, would have been the fitting conclusion to this game.

22.♘b1

This disturbs the equilibrium and only results in the convulsion of his own position.

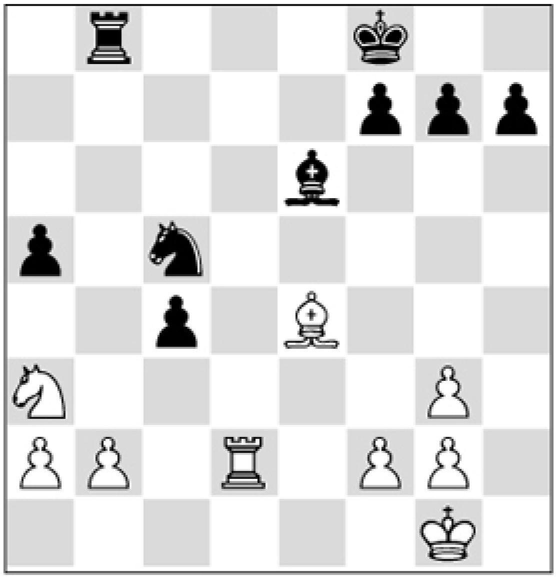
22…♖b8 23.♖1d2 ♕xa3!

Stronger than 23…♖db7; e.g., 24.♕c3! ♕xc3 25.♘xc3 ♖xb2 26.♖xb2 ♖xb2 27.♗xd5 ♘xd5 28.♘xd5 ♖xa2 29.♖xc4, with equality.

24.♘xa3 ♔f8

Not 24…♖db7 because of 25.♘xc4.

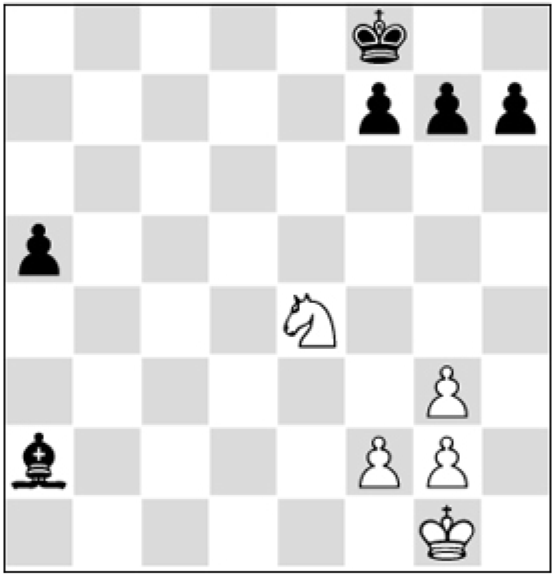
25.e4 dxe4 26.♖xd7 ♘xd7 27.♗xe4 ♘c5



28.♜d4

The weakness of the b2-pawn would have been apparent even after the best continuation, 28.♗c6 ♖b4 29.♗d5 ♘a4. After the text move, however, the win is easy. There followed:

28…♞xe4 29.♜xe4 ♜xb2 30.♞xc4 ♜b4 31.♞d6 ♜xe4 32.♞xe4 ♝xa2



33.♞c3

On 33.♔f1 Black would have played 33…♗c4+ and 34…♗d5!. But if 33.♘c5, then 33…♔e7 34.♔f1 ♔d6! 35.♘b7+ ♔c6 36.♘xa5+ ♔b6 and wins.

33…♝c4 34.f4 ♚e7 35.♚f2 ♚d6 36.♚e3 ♚c5 37.g4 ♚b4 38.♚d4 ♝b3 39.g5 a4 40.♘b1 ♝e6 41.g3 ♚b3 42.♘c3 a3 43.♚d3 g6 44.♚d4 ♚c2

White resigned.

In the following game the hanging pawns are maintained at their locations on c4 and d4 for a considerable period of time. This (static) security is built on an evolving ‘minor’ initiative on the far queenside and on the f3-b7 diagonal.

Game 66

Aron Nimzowitsch
Milan Vidmar
New York 1927 (20)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3

I only needed a draw; Vidmar needed a win.

3…♘f6 4.e5 ♘d5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 ♝e7

We prefer 6…b6.

7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 d5

Here, too, 8…b6 was preferable.

9.exd6

Possible also was 9.♗d3 0-0 10.♕c2 g6 11.h4, etc.

9…♛xd6 10.♝e2

With the hanging pawns on c4 and d4, the bishop belongs on e2 and *not* d3.

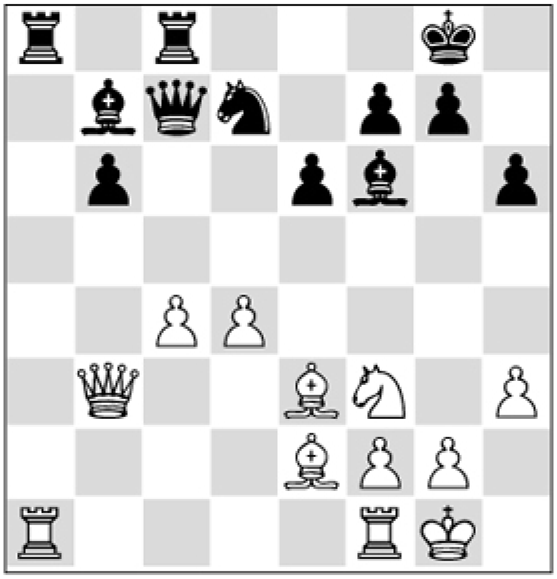
10…0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.a4!

The ‘minor’ initiative, directed against the pawn that will soon appear at b6.

12…♛c7 13.♛b3 b6 14.c4 ♝b7 15.a5! ♝f6

On 15…bxa5 there would have followed 16.♗f4! ♕b6 17.♕a4, with a double attack against a5 and the knight at d7.

16.axb6 axb6 17.♝e3 h6 18.h3 ♜fc8



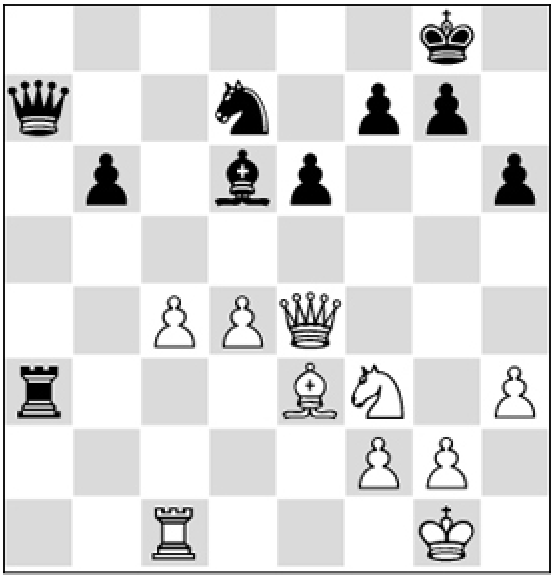
19.♜fc1!

A move that results in the win of a whole tempo. Black cannot accept the pawn sacrifice connected with this move without letting all his chances slip; e.g., 19…♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 ♕xc4 22.♕xc4 ♖xc4 23.♖a8+ ♘f8 24.d5, when White has full command of the game.

19…♜cb8 20.♜xa8 ♜xa8

The double-move …♖f8-c8-b8 gave White the tempo mentioned above.

21.♞d2 ♝e7 22.♝f3 ♜a3 23.♛b2 ♝xf3 24.♞xf3 ♜a5 25.♛d2 ♝a3 26.♜c2 ♝d6 27.♜c1 ♝a3 28.♜c2 ♝d6 29.♜c1 ♛a7 30.♛d3 ♜a3 31.♛e4



The white central hegemony established by this move corresponds to the Logos of the game. It may have occurred to the attentive reader that the flank attack introduced by a2-a4-a5 has merely resulted in Black obtaining the attack in that sector. This handing of the attack over to the opponent could only be explained as the result of mistakes committed on the part of White or by the fact that his attack lacked an inherent justification. But in fact neither is the case. White has played the attack correctly and was clearly justified in doing so, for in this way and only in this way could the stability of his own hanging pawns be preserved. Hence Black must have sit venia verbo usurped the attack on the extreme wing. But this attack could only be acquired by giving up important territory elsewhere, namely, in the central domain. It is in light of this fact that the hegemony attained by White in the center becomes comprehensible.

The finish is replete with compelling logic.

31…♞f6 32.♛c6 ♜xe3! 33.♛xd6!

Draw.

Black’s operations on the wing were conducted with great power, but these were parried by cold-blooded play in the center – wing operations and central action balanced each other out. Regarding the acceptance of the sacrifice, the following variation is instructive: 33.fxe3 ♕a3 34.♖e1 ♗g3 35.♖f1 ♕xe3+ 36.♔h1 ♘e4, the principal threat being 37…♗f4.

A game very soundly played by both sides.

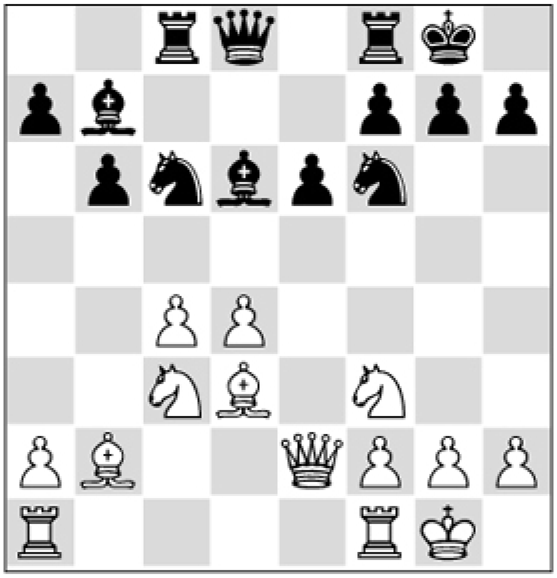
Game 67

Siegbert Tarrasch
Aron Nimzowitsch
Hamburg 1910 (6)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗d3 ♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 b6 9.♗b2 ♗b7 10.♕e2 dxc4 11.bxc4 cxd4 12.exd4

The bright and shadow sides of the ‘hangers’ are just about balanced in this position.

12…♖c8



13.♖ad1

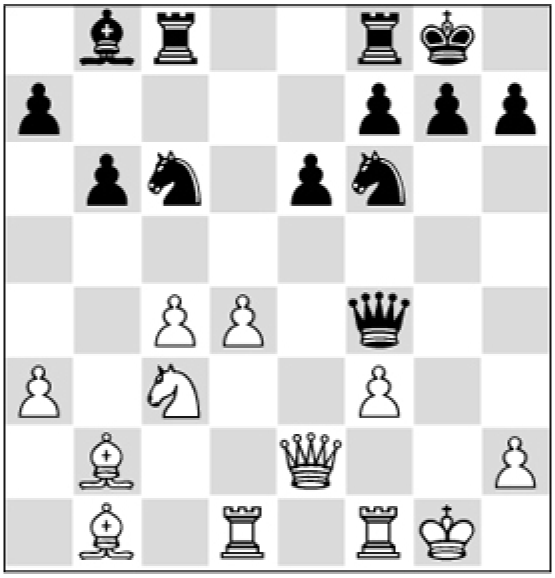
A feeble move. The possible undermining of the bishop at d3 – the best support of the hanging pawns, had to be prevented by 13.a3. There might follow: 13…♘a5 14.♘e5 ♗a6 (*not* 14…♘b3 15.♖ad1 ♘xd4 because of 16.♗xh7+, etc.) 15.♖ad1 ♗xe5 (15…♕e7? would lose a piece on account of the reply 16.c5!, etc., but 15…♕c7 could be considered; e.g., 16.♘b5 ♗xb5, etc.) 16.dxe5 ♘d7, when White has two possibilities, namely, 17.♘b5 or 17.c5. White can go into the line 17.c5 ♗xd3 18.♖xd3 ♕e7 19.♘e4! (threatening 20.♘f6+!, etc.) ♖fd8! 20.cxb6 ♘xb6 21.♘d6, with as much confidence as he can into the more positional treatment of the position with 17.♘b5 ♗xb5

18.cxb5 ♖c7 19.♕e4 g6 20.♕b4!, with a safe game (the weakness of the ‘white squares’ is well protected) and indeed with some initiative. For example, 20…♕c8 21.♖fe1 ♘c5 22.♗f1 ♖d8 23.♗c1!, with the threat 24.♗g5. The interested reader might study the variations indicated here; the pros and cons of the hanging pawns are seen here especially vividly.

13…♘b4 14.♗b1 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♗b8!

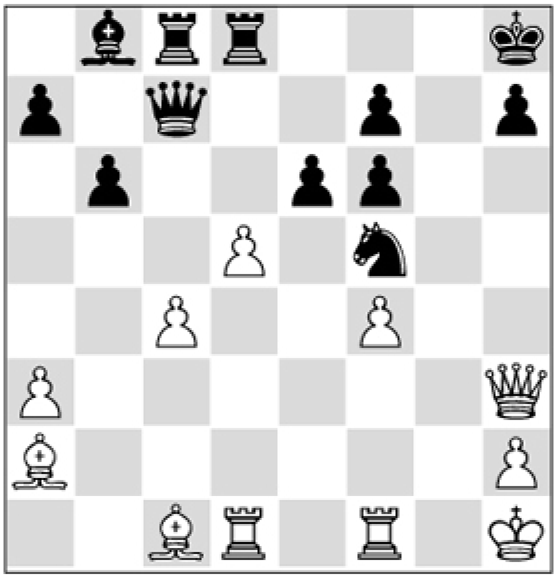
Strong also was 15…♘h5.

16.a3 ♕c7 17.f4 ♕xf4 18.f3 ♘c6



White has lost a pawn, but his two bishops, the g-file – and, last but not least, the two hanging pawns promise him some attacking chances.

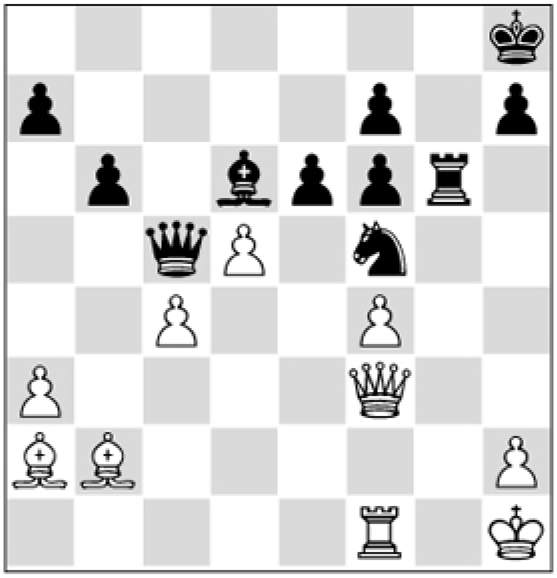
19.♘e4 ♖fd8 20.♔h1 ♘e7! 21.♗c1 ♕c7 22.♘xf6+ gxf6 23.♕g2+ ♘g6 24.♗a2 ♔h8 25.f4 ♘h4 26.♕h3 ♘f5 27.d5



To make use of the b2-f6 diagonal for attacking purposes. Advancing the pawns to open lines for the pieces behind them must be classified entirely under the heading ‘Dynamics’. We might rather have chosen the category ‘Statics’, namely the build-up with 27.♗b2 followed by ♕f3 and the posting of the rooks on the c- and d-files. Observe at this point how Black answers ‘dynamics’ with ‘statics’: he hems in and blockades the pawns on c4 and d5 as much as possible.

27…♖g8 28.♗b2 ♖g6 29.♖g1 ♖cg8 30.♖xg6 ♖xg6 31.♖f1 ♕c5 32.♕f3 ♗d6

The blockade.



33.♛f2 ♛xf2

The blockade squares at d6 and especially c5 provide a springboard for all manner of invasive inroads; e.g., 33… ♕e3 was threatened.

34.♜xf2 ♝c5 35.♜g2 ♚g7 36.♜xg6+ hxg6

Now it is no longer difficult. There followed:

37.♚g2 ♝d4! 38.♝c1 ♝e3

The neat bishop maneuver forces an exchange.

39.♝xe3 ♞xe3+ 40.♚f3 ♞f5 41.♝b1 ♞d6 42.♝d3 e5 43.♚g4 f5+ 44.♚g3 f6 45.h4 ♚f7 46.♝e2 ♞e8 47.♚f3 ♚e7 48.♚e3 ♞g7 49.♝f3 ♚d6

The knight heads for h5 to dissolve the doubled pawns. Meanwhile, the king substitutes for the knight as blockader.

50.♝d1 ♞h5 51.fxe5+

The pawn ending after 51.♗xh5 would be hopeless because of the breakthrough possibility …b6-b5.

51…fxe5 52.♚d3 ♚c5 53.a4 ♞f6 54.♝e2 ♞e8 55.♚c3 ♞d6 56.♝f1 e4 57.♚d2 f4 58.♚c3 f3

0-1

Game 68

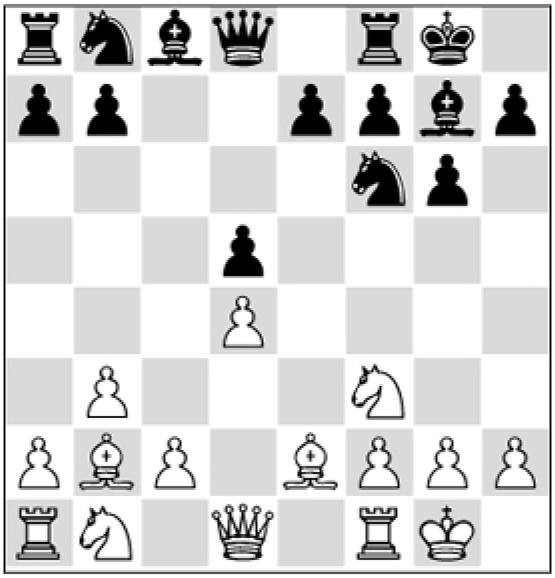
Jacob Brekke

Aron Nimzowitsch

Casual game, Oslo 1921

The hanging pawns appear only as a latent threat in this game, which is as protracted as it is interesting (the ending is especially piquant).

1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.e3 g6 4.♝e2 ♝g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 c5 7.♝b2 cxd4 8.exd4

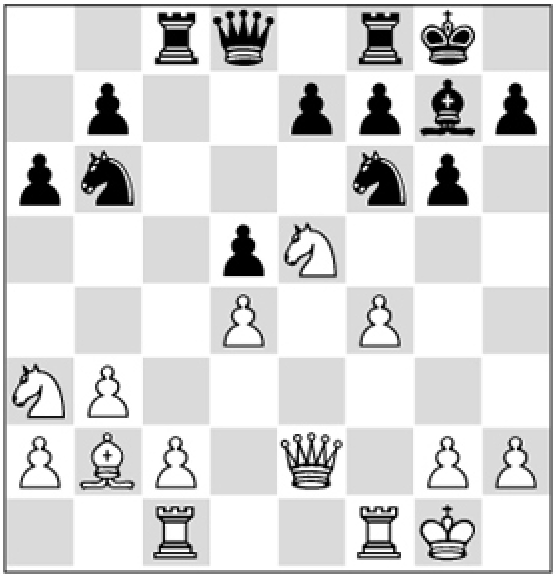


Now Black is thinking to create hanging pawns if possible at c4 and d4 with …dxc4.

8…♝g4 9.♘e5 ♝xe2 10.♕xe2 ♘bd7 11.f4 ♖c8 12.♘a3

Original and not bad.

12…♘b6 13.♖ac1 a6



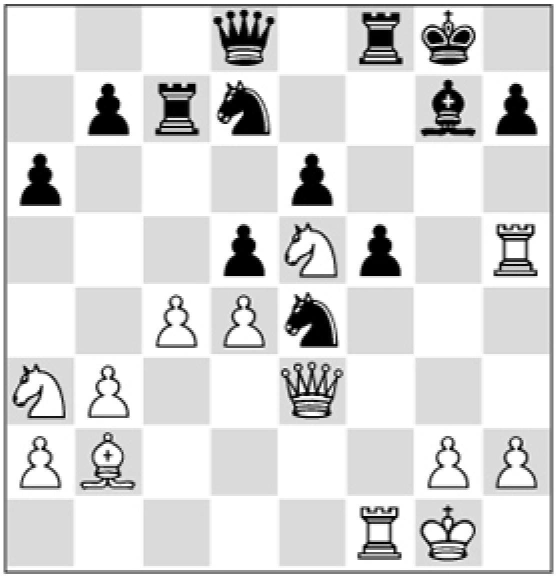
14.f5

14.c4 dxc4 15.bxc4 and then c4-c5 (followed by ♘ac4) as quickly as possible would have brought about the situation we have declared desirable, namely, the security gained by blockade combined with some measure of initiative. 14.f5 must therefore be seen as a deviation from the straight path – although to be sure a pardonable one.

14…gxf5 15.♖xf5 ♘e4 16.♖cf1 f6 17.♘g4 e6 18.♖h5

Scattering the rook; its absence will soon be felt. 18.♖f3 looks better.

18…f5 19.♘e5 ♖c7 20.♕e3 ♘d7 21.c4



At last Brekke, unquestionably a player of master strength, decides on this advance. But a different pawn configuration arises and the hanging pawns do not occur.

21…♘xe5 22.dxe5 ♖d7

Note the flexibility of the rook on its own second rank.

23.cxd5 ♖xd5

Now the d-file has an enormous impact; cf. the note to the 18th move.

24.♘c4 b5 25.♘d6!

Best!

25…♖xd6 26.exd6 ♗xb2 27.♕h6 ♗d4+ 28.♔h1 ♖f7 29.♕xe6 ♕xd6 30.♖g5+ ♗g7 31.♕xd6 ♘xd6 32.♖d1

The ending is clearly a difficult one to win.

32…♖f6 33.♔g1 ♔f7 34.a4 b4 35.♖d5 ♖e6 36.♖a5 ♖e3 37.♖xa6 ♗d4 38.♔f1 ♗e5 39.a5 ♖xb3 40.♖h5 ♖b1+ 41.♔e2 b3

The composed 41…♔g6 could have been played.

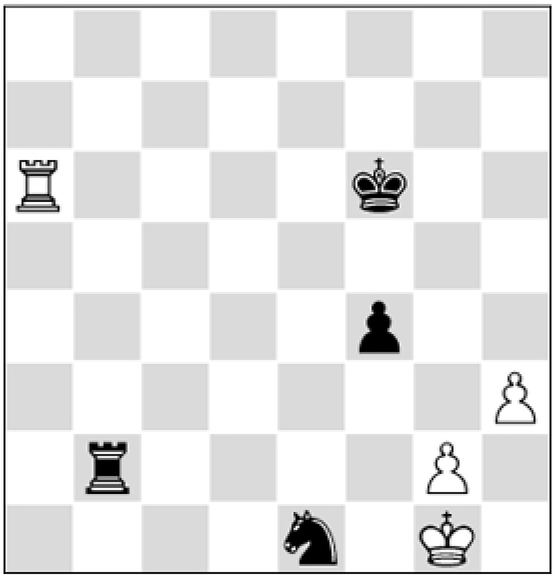
42.♖xh7+ ♔e6 43.♖h3 b2 44.♖b3 ♖a1 45.♖ab6 ♖xa5 46.♖xb2

He could have waited with this.

46…♗xb2 47.♖xb2 ♘c4 48.♖c2 ♔d5 49.♔f3 ♖a4 50.♖e2 ♘e5+ 51.♔f2 f4 52.h3 ♖a3 53.♖d2+ ♔e4 54.♖c2 ♖e3 55.♖a2 ♘d3+ 56.♔g1 ♖e1+ 57.♔h2 ♔e3 58.♖a3 ♖e2 59.♔g1 ♖b2 60.♖a1 ♖c2 61.♖a3 ♔e2 62.♖a4 ♖c1+ 63.♔h2 ♔e3 64.♖a3 ♖b1 65.♖c3 ♖b2 66.♔g1 ♔d4 67.♖a3 ♘e1 68.♖a4+

There now follows an interesting duel between king and rook.

68…♔e5 69.♖a5+ ♔f6 70.♖a6+

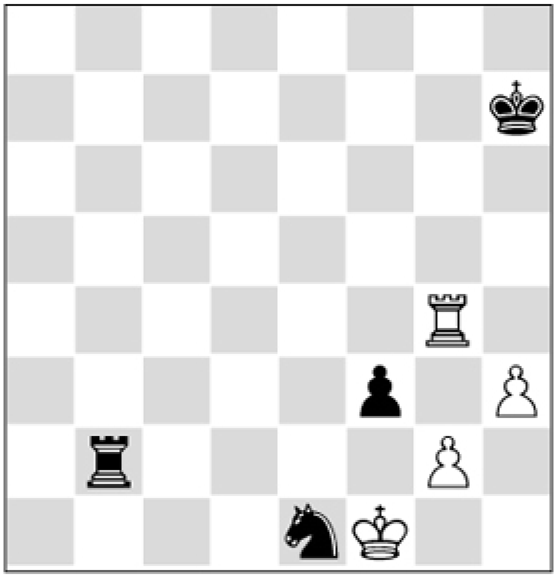


70…♔g5

It was simpler to escape via g7, h6, and h5, to h4, but Black spots a piquant turn that he does not want to let slip.

71.♖a8 ♔h6 72.♖g8 ♔h7! 73.♖g4 f3! 74.♔f1

If 74.gxf3, 74…♘xf3+ of course wins.



74…fxg2+!

More elegant and more quickly decisive than 74…♘xg2 75.♖e4, etc. Black wins through zugzwang.

75.♚xe1 ♚h6 76.h4 ♚h5 77.♜g5+ ♚xh4, etc.

Game 69

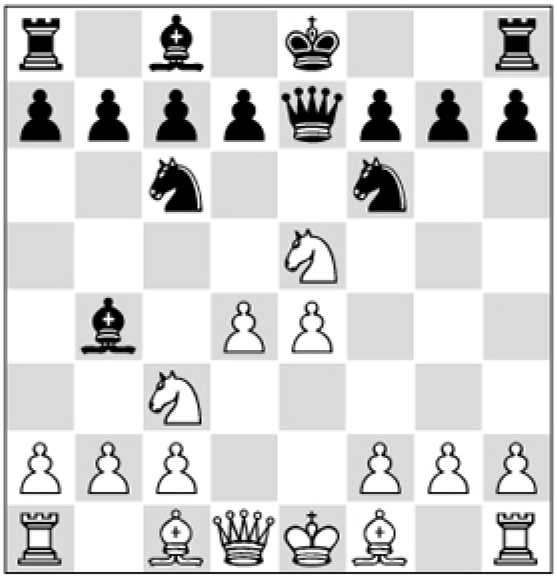
Aron Nimzowitsch
Paul Leonhardt
Ostend 1907 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 ♝b4 5.♘xe5!

A novelty played for the first time here.

5…♛e7

Best. Unfavorable, on the other hand, is 5…♘xe5 6.dxe5 ♘xe4 because of 7.♕g4.



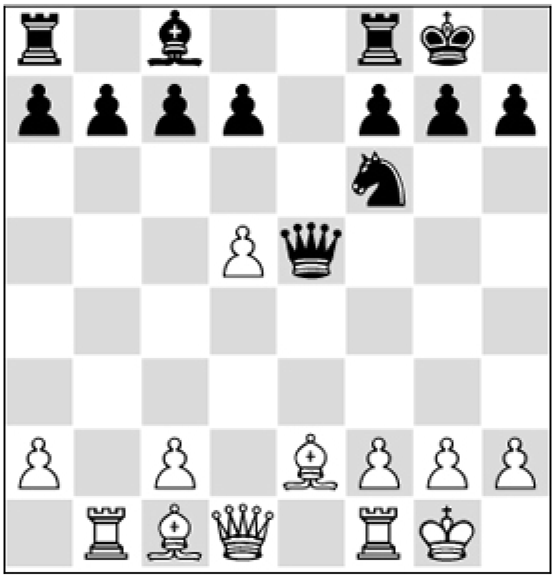
6.♘xc6!

If White does not care to sacrifice a pawn he can also get by well enough with 6.♕d3 ♘xe5 7.dxe5 ♕xe5 8.♗d2, a continuation recommended by Dr. Krause.

6…♕xe4+ 7.♗e2 ♕xc6 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♕xc3 10.♖b1 0-0 11.d5!

Now the bishops combine to exert their effect.

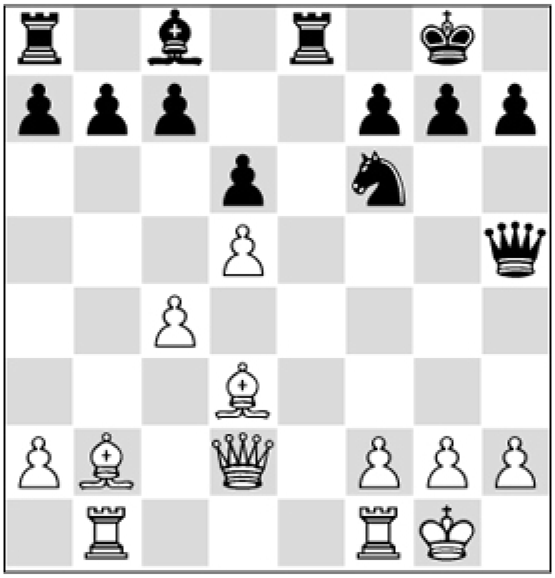
11…♕e5



12.c4

Playable at this point also is 12.d6; e.g., 12…♕xd6 13.♕xd6 cxd6 14.♗a3, etc.

12…♜e8 13.♝d3 d6 14.♝b2 ♛h5 15.♛d2



15…♞e4?

Black clearly underestimates the enemy bishops! Why not 15…♘g4!? If 16.h3, then 16…♘e5, when Black has threats both material (17…♘xd3) and theoretical (…f7-f6, damming up the diagonal b2-g7). The bishops would then be rendered harmless. But then, the prophylactic style of play is only for the few.

16.♜be1 ♝f5 17.♛f4 ♛g6 18.♜e3

The violent 18.g4 would fail to 18…♘xf2!.

18…♚f8

In order to protect the rook more thoroughly.

19.h3!

Not 19.♖fe1 because of 19…♘g3!. The text move prepares the decisive attack by ♖f3, which on this move would fail to 19…♗g4.

19…h5 20.♜f3 ♝d7 21.♜e1

Black resigned.

One gets the impression that the ‘two bishops’ are not to be trifled with. But prophylactic measures based on the elimination – in fact or in effect – of *one* of the bishops (cf. the note to move 15) do seem to represent a noteworthy individual case.

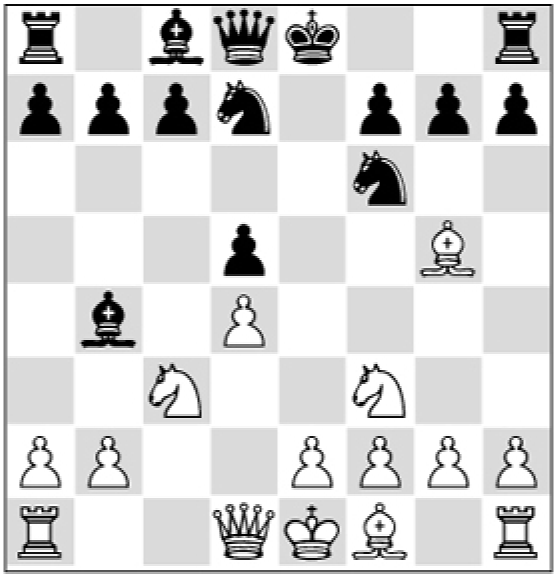
Game 70

Maurice Goldstein
Aron Nimzowitsch
London 1927

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 ♘d7 4.♘c3 ♘gf6 5.♗g5 ♗b4

Spielmann’s ingenious special line.

6.cxd5 exd5



7.e3

If 7.♕a4, 7…c5 can be played at once; e.g., 8.dxc5 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.c6 ♕c7!.

7…h6

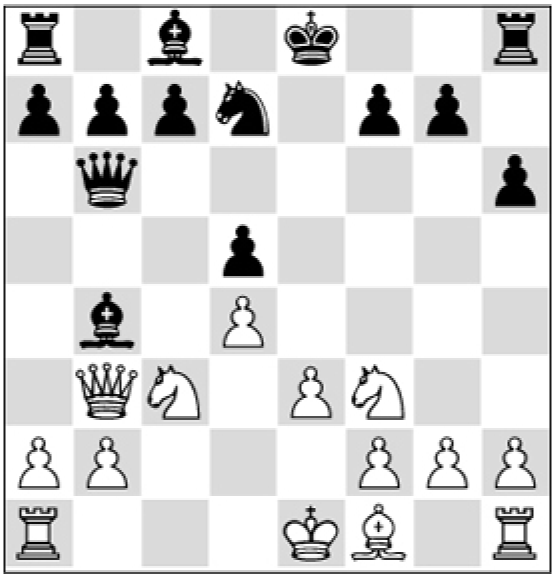
Possible was 7…c5; for example: 8.dxc5? ♕a5, etc.

8.♗xf6 ♕xf6

Very solid, instead, was the line 8…♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♘xf6; if then 10.c4, the counter-stroke 10…c5 could be played.

9.♕b3 ♕b6

With a view to complicating the game; otherwise, 9…♕d6 could have been played, with the sequel 10.♗e2 c5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.♕c2 ♘e4 13.0-0 ♗xc3.



10.♝d3

Accepting the pawn sacrifice with 10.♕xd5 would have led to an unclear game after 10…♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♕b2 12.♕e4+ ♔d8 13.♖d1 ♕xc3+ 14.♘d2 ♖e8 15.♕b1! ♘b6! (15…♕xd4 would be risky) 16.♗e2 ♗d7.

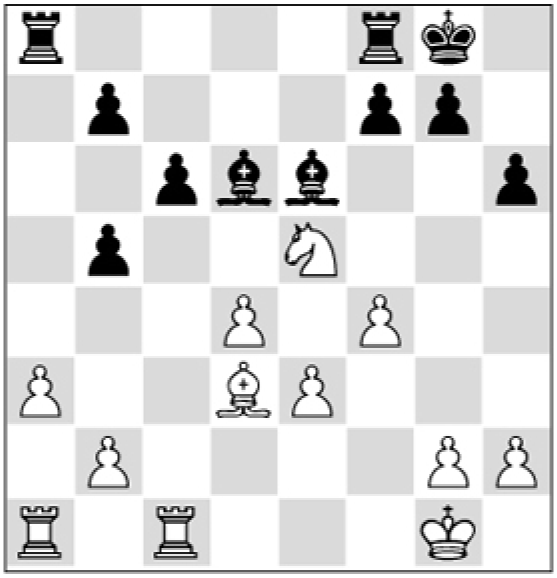
10…♞f6 11.0-0 0-0!!

A pawn sacrifice based entirely on the superiority of the ‘two bishops’.

12.♞xd5 ♞xd5 13.♛xd5 ♝e6 14.♛b5

Not 14.♕e4 because of 14…f5 15.♕e5 ♖ae8.

14…♝e7! 15.♜fc1 c6 16.♛xb6 axb6 17.a3 b5 18.♞e5 ♝d6 19.f4



He advances his central majority all too rapidly. Notice how the two bishops both ‘lure on’ and restrain.

19…f6 20.♘f3 ♝d5! 21.e4 ♝f7 22.e5 ♝b8

The d4-pawn now looks quite weak.

23.♜e1 fxe5!

On 23…♗a7 there could have followed, *inter alia*, 24.exf6 and 25.♖e7.

24.fxe5

If 24.dxe5, then 24…♗e6 25.g3 g5, etc.

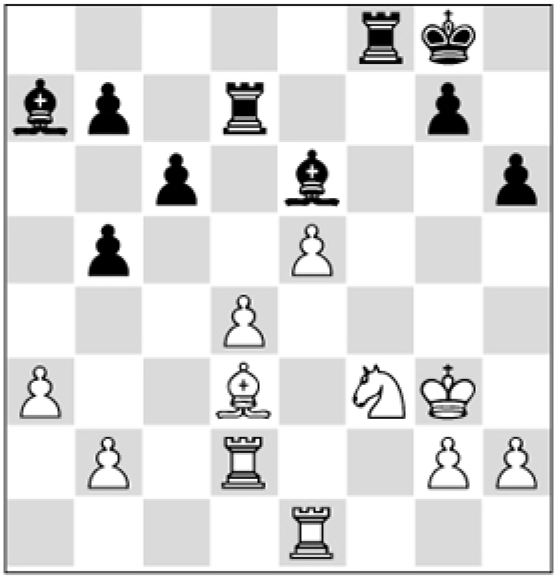
24…♝e6

Restraining the d-pawn; see the note to move 19.

25.♚f2 ♝a7 26.♚g3

26.♔e3 would be no better.

26…♜ad8 27.♜ad1 ♜d7 28.♜d2



28…♜fd8

Very much to be considered was 28…g5; e.g., 29.h3 ♖g7, with threats to be taken seriously.

29.♝c2 g5 30.h3 ♚f7

There is no hurry in rectifying the pawn deficit – 30…♗xd4 31.♘xd4 ♖xd4 32.♖xd4 ♖xd4 33.♖d1, with equality. The king move is intended, *inter alia*, as a preventive measure against the passed e-pawn – on e7 the king would function as a reserve blockader.

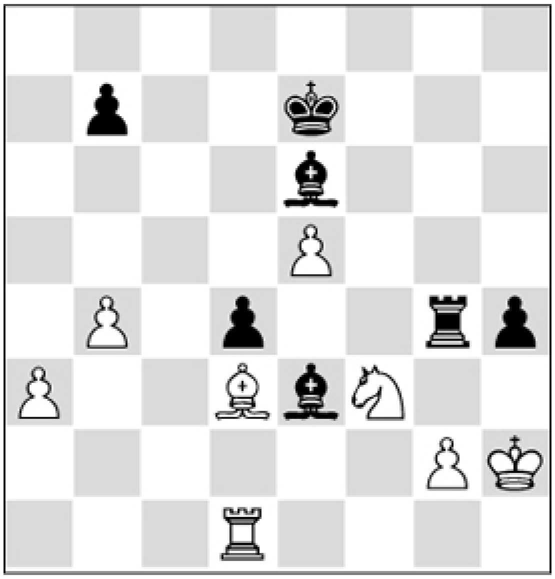
31.♜ed1 ♚e7 32.♝e4 h5 33.d5!

Master Goldstein is defending his difficult position splendidly.

33…cxd5 34.♝d3 ♜g8 35.♝xb5 g4 36.hxg4 ♜xg4+ 37.♚h2 ♜c7 38.♝d3?

With 38.♘d4 the game could have been held.

38…♝e3 39.♜c2 ♜xc2 40.♝xc2 d4 41.b4 h4! 42.♝d3 h3!



43.♝f1

If 43.gxh3, then 43…♗f4+ 44.♔h1 ♗d5!. But if 43.♔xh3, then 43…♖g8+ 44.♔h2 ♗f2 45.♘g1 ♗d5 46.♗f1 ♗g3+ 47.♔h1 ♖h8+ 48.♘h3 ♖xh3+ and wins.

43…hxg2 44.♝xg2

The advance of the h-pawn has not only led to a demotion of the white bishop (which now functions as a pawn) but to an unblocking of Black’s passed pawn as well. Herein lies the meaning of Black’s maneuver.

44…♝b3 45.♜e1 ♝f4+ 46.♚h1

If 46.♔g1, then 46…♗d5 47.♖f1 d3.

46…♝d5 47.♜d1 ♜g8 48.♜xd4 ♜h8+ 49.♚g1 ♝e3+ 50.♚f1 ♝xd4 51.♞xd4 ♜f8+ 52.♚g1 ♜g8 53.♞f5+ ♚e6 54.♞e3 ♝xg2 55.♞xg2 ♜g3 56.♚f2 ♜xa3 57.♞e3 ♜b3

White resigned.

The accomplishments by the two bishops in this game were quite multifaceted. The bishops ‘lured on’ and restrained until the hostile majority was rendered valueless. Then the enemy king faced a barrage from all possible diagonals. Finally, the bishops bestowed upon the insignificant little passed pawn on d4 their high patronage, this pawn becoming transformed into a giant.

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Part V

Alternating Maneuvers Against Enemy Weaknesses When Possessing an Advantage in Space

In the strategic combination (to be examined more closely in this part) of ‘enemy weaknesses’ and ‘one’s own advantage in space’, the advantage in space constitutes the dominant principle. These weaknesses are often created as a kind of side effect, a consequence as it were of territorial pressure on the part of the opponent (cf. Games 71 and 73).

The course of a maneuvering action directed against two enemy weaknesses could be outlined as follows: two weaknesses, each of which is entirely capable of being defended, are placed under *alternating* fire, whereby the attacker bases his actions on a superiority in his lines of communication. Loss of the game results because at some point the defender proves unable to keep pace with his opponent in the rapid re-grouping of his forces.

The point of the stratagem that is of interest to us clearly seems to lie therefore in the proper use of the lines of communication. Of what do these lines consist?

The lines of communication tend almost always to focus on *a particular* point, which accordingly forms the axis of the alternating operations. The relation between this point in the enemy camp and the pieces that aim for it correspond to the contact that exists between a ‘strong point’ and its ‘over-protectors’. In the game vs. Schlage (71) – White: king at g1, knights on b2 and d2, pawns on b4, c3, f3 g2, and h3; Black: king on c6, bishop on d5, knight on e5, pawns on b5, e6, f5, g5, and h5 – the d5-square forms our axis. By means of threats on the kingside Black was able to divert the doorkeepers (the knights), then he invaded with …♗c4 followed by …♘d3 and …♘b2. We note that d5, c4, and likewise d3 were all light-square weaknesses. In the queen ending vs. Antze (75), the d4-square (together with the corresponding points e5 and f6) functioned as the axis. The arc described by the queen was: d4-f6-f7-e8-f7-f6-d4. In the game vs. Von Gottschall, *zugzwang* emerged as the *deus ex machina*; the defender was forced to destroy a defensive position so carefully built up as it were with his own hand. In Game 74, the alternating maneuvers take place within the inner line, while Game 76 seems to be notable in that the two squares comprising the axis (e6, then later e5) were white and black, while the square complex otherwise tends to be of one color only, as in Games 71, 75, etc.

Alternating maneuvers can also be aimed at one weakness only; in this case multiple attacks (e.g., frontal, lateral, and circumventing) substitute for the multiplicity of weaknesses.

The sympathetic reader can find further information in Games 71-77, which have been treated with meticulous care.

Game 71

Willi Schlage
Aron Nimzowitsch
Berlin 1928 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞c3 d5 4.exd5 ♞xd5 5.♝b5+

5.♘e5 was worth considering.

5…♝d7 6.♝c4 ♞b6 7.♝e2 ♞c6 8.0-0

Rightly passing on 8.d4; e.g., 8…cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 ♗c6.

8…♝f5

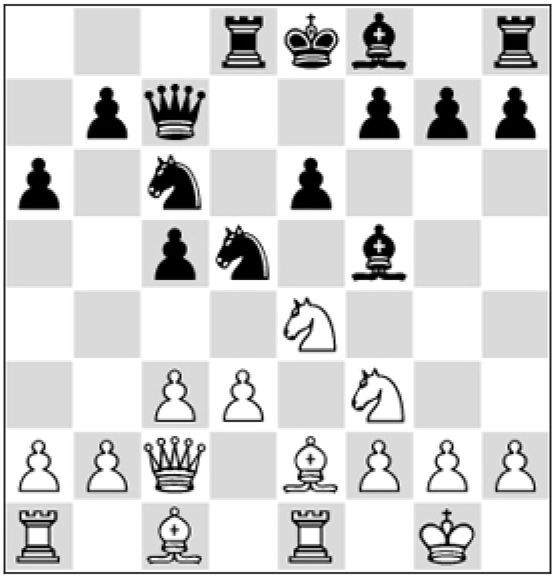
Played in order to use his forces to control all the central squares (here d4 and e4).

But the old classical move 8…e5 was not to be despised.

9.♜e1 a6

Indirectly defending the central point e5.

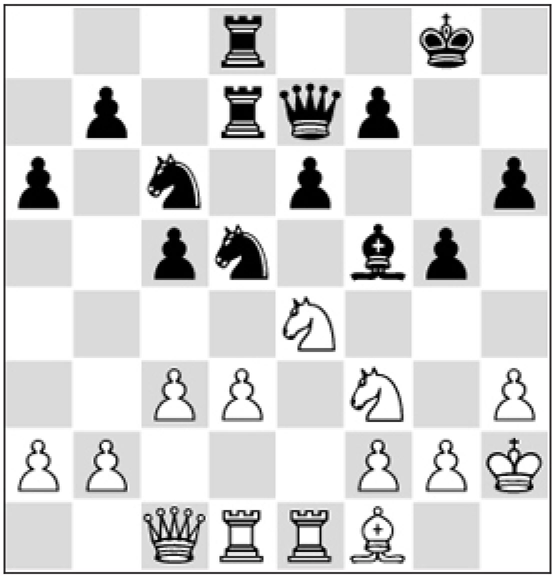
10.d3 e6 11.♞e4 ♛c7 12.c3 ♜d8 13.♛c2 ♞d5



Each player now has a centrally posted knight, and the game is approximately level.

14.♗g5 ♝e7 15.♗xe7 ♛xe7 16.h3 0-0 17.♖ad1 ♜d7 18.♗f1 ♜fd8 19.♕c1 h6 20.♔h2 g5

In view of his considerable strength in the center Black can permit this loosening, but 20…♗h7 would have been more solid; e.g., 21.d4? ♗xe4 and 22…♘f6, etc.



21.♘g3

The complications following 21.h4 g4 22.♕xh6 gxf3 23.c4! turn out to be favorable for the second player after 23…♘e5 24.gxf3 ♘xf3+ and 25…♘xe1. With the text move White achieves a clear, balanced game.

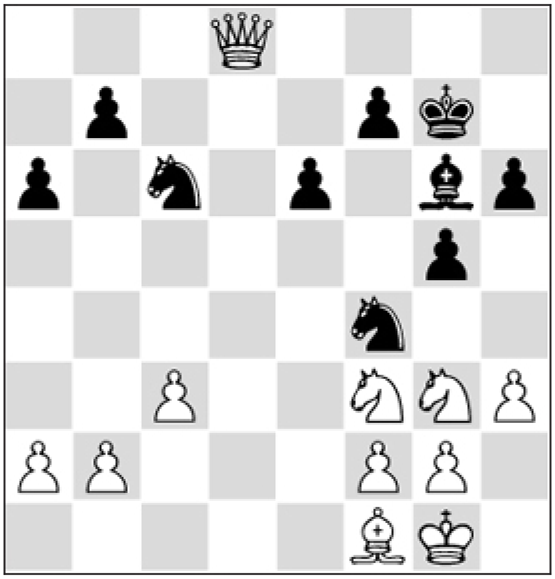
21…♝g6 22.d4 ♘b6

With a view to a potential diversion to a4.

23.dxc5 ♕xc5 24.♖xd7 ♖xd7 25.♔g1 ♕e7

A well-motivated retreat. There wasn't much for the queen at c5, and she even stood somewhat exposed to a possible b2-b4 followed by a2-a3 and c3-c4.

26.♖d1 ♖xd1 27.♕xd1 ♕d8 28.♕c1 ♔g7 29.♕e3 ♘d5 30.♕d2 ♘f4 31.♕xd8

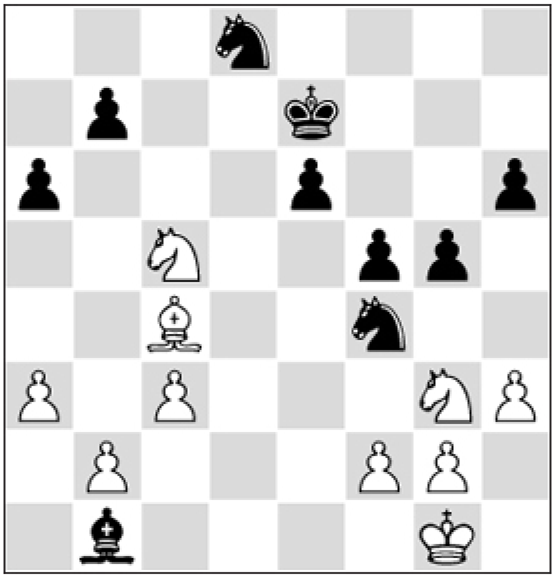


The game is headed into the endgame phase, for which, however, Black, due to the greater mobility of his king, would seem to be the somewhat better prepared.

31…♘xd8 32.♘e5 ♝b1 33.a3 f6 34.♘d7 ♔f7 35.♘c5

An excellent placement for a knight.

35…♔e7 36.♝c4 f5



37.♘e2

Giving his opponent the opportunity to eliminate the fine white bishop. But still less favorable would have been 37.♘f1, with the sequel 37… ♔d6 38.b4 b5 39.♗b3 ♘e2+ 40.♔h2 and now 40… a5!.

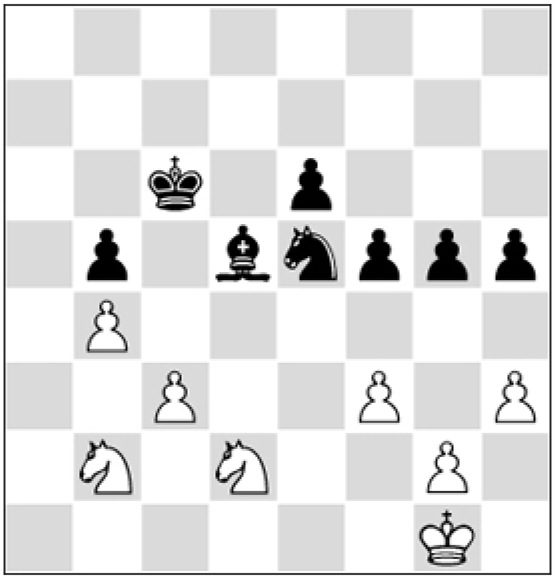
37…♔d6 38.b4 ♗a2! 39.♘xf4 ♗xc4 40.♘h5 b6 41.♘a4 ♗b3! 42.♘b2

42.♘xb6? ♔c7! 43.♘a8+ ♔b7.

42…♘f7 43.♘g3 ♘e5 44.♘f1 b5

Black clearly stands better, but it is difficult for him to make progress, for the white knights are good gate-keepers in this position.

45.♘d2 ♗d5 46.a4 h5 47.axb5 axb5 48.f3 ♔c6



The beginning of intricate maneuvering play. The required two weaknesses on the defending side are clearly present: the kingside is one (there is the threat …g5-g4 or …e6-e5-e4); the queen’s wing is the other – here we see the long-term threat of penetrating with the king via c4. The d5-square, in particular, functions as an axis for maneuvering, but so does all the territory adjacent to d5; for instance, the point c4 and the diversionary squares that become available after its occupation.

The king move enables the black knight on e5 to move, for if now c3-c4 (after a prior …♘f7), Black would win a pawn through the sequence …bxc4; ♘bxc4 ♗xc4; ♘xc4 ♔b5.

49.♚f1

White is already obliged to proceed with care; that is, if 49.♔f2 (instead of 49.♔f1), then 49…g4 50.hxg4 hxg4 51.fxg4 ♘xg4+ 52.♔g1 ♘e3, with an unpleasant position for White.

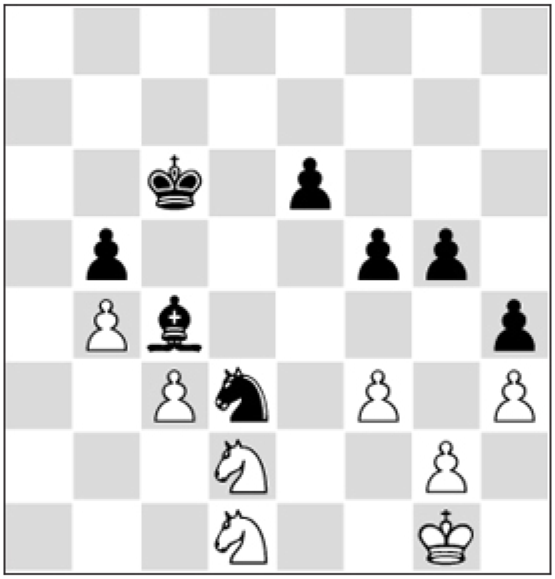
49…h4 50.♞d1 ♝c4+

Cf. the note to the 48th move.

51.♚g1

If 51.♘xc4, then 51…♘xc4 52.♔e2 ♔d5 53.♔d3 e5 and White is worse.

51…♞d3



52.♘e3

Here, too, 52.♘xc4 would be quite dubious; e.g., 52.♘xc4 bxc4 53.♘e3 ♔b5 54.♘c2 ♔a4 55.♘d4 e5 56.♘xf5 ♔b3 57.b5 ♔xc3, etc.

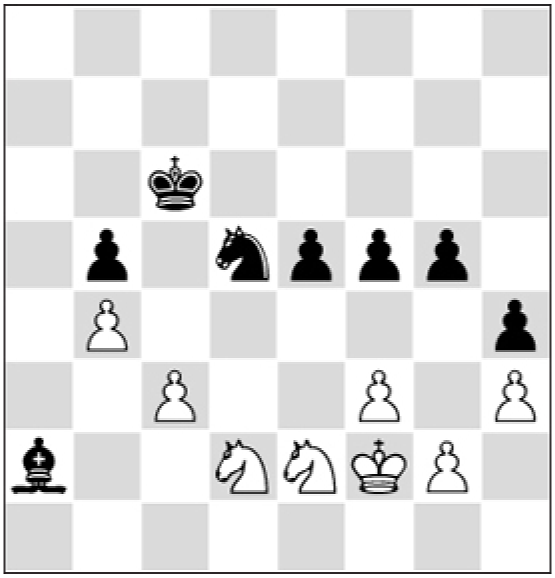
52…♝d5 53.♘c2 ♞b2! 54.♘d4+ ♚b6 55.♔h2 ♞d1 56.♘e2 e5

Black’s knight has used the c4-square as a springboard, while over the past few moves White has lost territory.

57.♔g1

If 57.g3, simply 57…f4 would follow.

57…♚c6 58.♔f1 ♝a2 59.♔g1 ♞e3 60.♔f2 ♞d5



61.g4

Black was already threatening 61…♘f4; for instance: 61.♔f1 ♘f4 62.♘xf4 gxf4 63.♔e2 ♔d5 followed by …e5-e4-e3, winning.

Note the full use made of the maneuvering axis at d5 (both by the knight and the bishop).

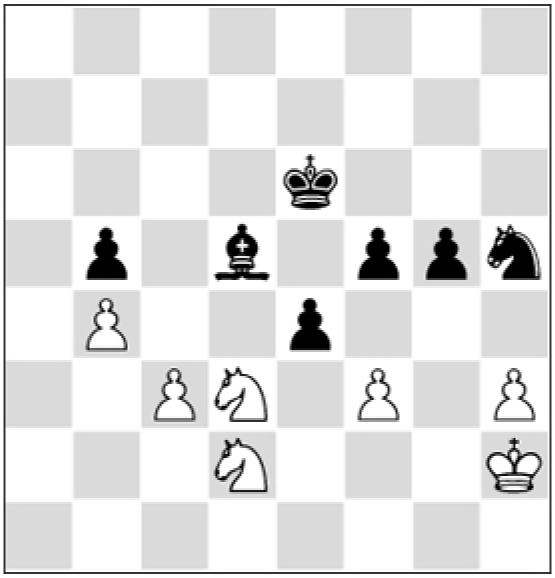
61…hxg3+ 62.♚xg3 ♘f6 63.♚f2

The intended 63.h4 would fail to the counter 63…f4+ 64.♔h3 ♗e6+. But now the weaknesses in White’s kingside assume tangible form (the h3-pawn will soon become a problem child).

When weaknesses are delineated so *explicitly*, alternating maneuvers are easier to carry out.

63…♚d6 64.♘g3 ♚e6 65.♘e2 ♘d5 66.♚g3 ♘f6 67.♘c1 ♗d5 68.♘d3 ♘h5+ 69.♚h2 e4

At last the majority gets rolling.



Inasmuch as White’s king is fettered to the weak point h3 and cannot be present to localize the enemy pawn breakthrough, this latter fact proves catastrophic.

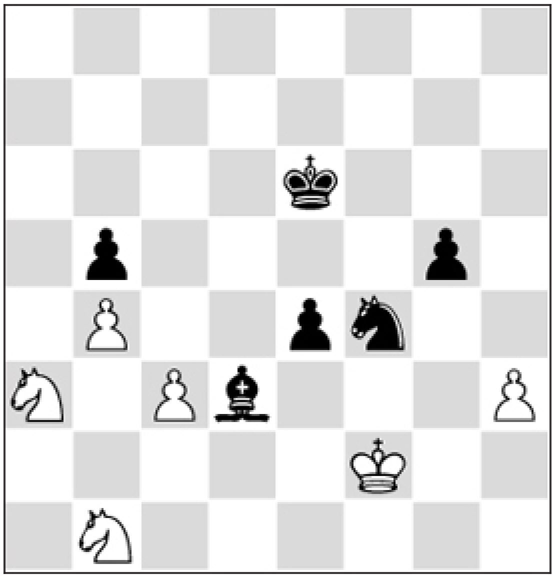
70.fxe4 fxe4 71.♘e1 ♘f4 72.♘c2 ♘e2!

For the second time this knight penetrates into the game.

73.♘b1

73.♘d4+ ♘xd4 74.cxd4 e3 loses directly.

73…♗c4 74.♔g2 ♗d3 75.♘ca3 ♘f4+ 76.♔f2!



He offers what he has to give, but…

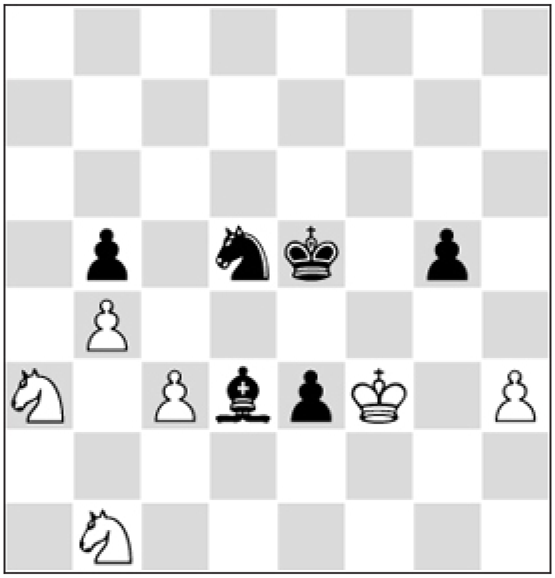
76…♘d5!

… his opponent is having none of it. For now both knights are stalemated!

77.♔g3

Or 77.♘d2 e3+, etc.

77…e3 78.♔f3 ♔e5



79.c4

Forced, since after 79.♔g3 ♘f4 80.♔f3 e2 81.♔f2 ♘g2 the game would be over.

79…bxc4 80.b5 ♔d6 81.b6 ♔c6 82.b7 ♔xb7 83.♘b5

Zugzwang! He simply has no moves!

83…♗xb1 84.♘d6+ ♔c7 85.♘xc4 ♗f5

0-1

The game lasted twelve hours. One of my best endgame performances. Schlage, by the way, defended superbly.

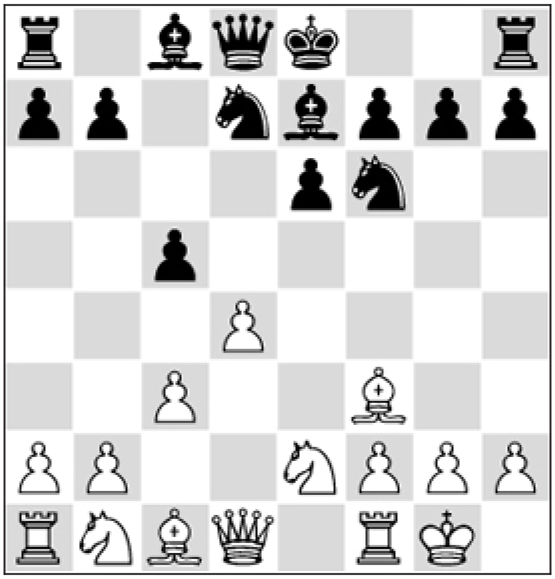
Game 72

Hermann von Gottschall
Aron Nimzowitsch
Hannover 1926 (2)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗d3 c5 4.c3 dxe4 5.♗xe4 ♘f6 6.♗f3

This denies the knight its natural developing square and permits Black to free himself later with …e6-e5.

6…♘bd7 7.♘e2 ♗e7 8.0-0

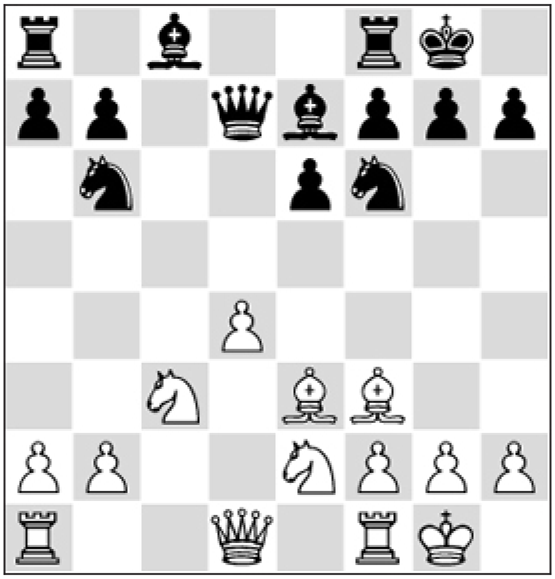


8…0-0

Forgoing the intended battle plan …e6-e5 without any apparent reason, and as a result Black finds himself in difficulties.

9.♗e3 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘b6 11.♘bc3 ♕d7!!

So that he can consolidate his position as quickly as possible with …♖d8 and …♘fd5.



12.♖c1?

Deserving preference was 12.♕b3 and a subsequent ♘e2-f4-d3, when he could have made use of his Isolani.

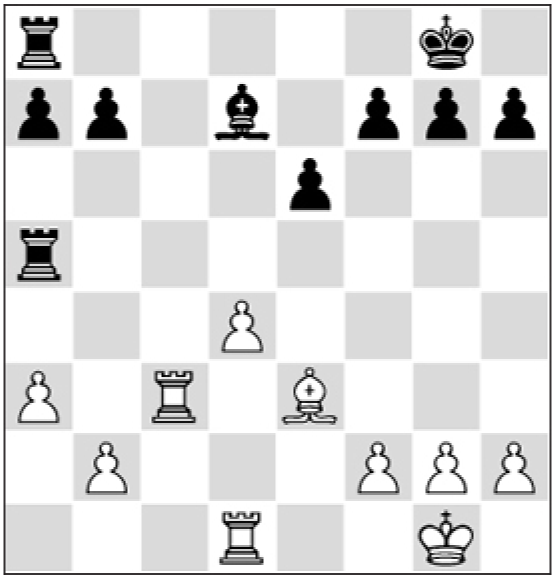
12…♖d8 13.♕b3 ♘fd5 14.♘xd5

White is playing for a draw.

14…♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♕xd5 16.♕xd5 ♖xd5 17.♘c3 ♖a5 18.♖fd1 ♗b4

To thwart 19.d5.

19.a3 ♗xc3 20.♖xc3 ♗d7

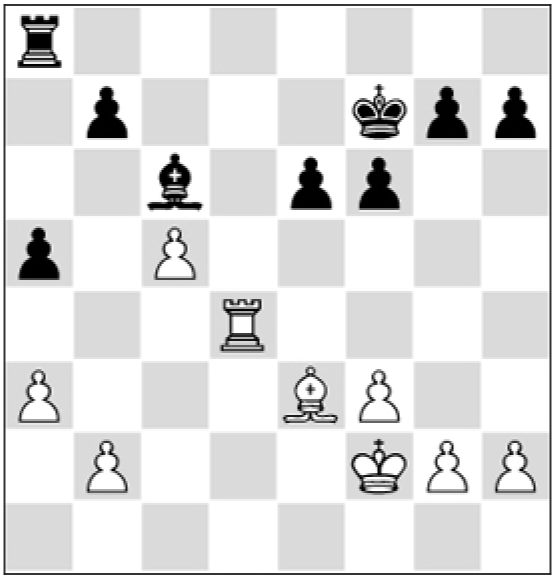


A dead draw!? The game is over!? No, there is still a lot in the position and the game is only beginning. The great controversy over the bright and shadow sides of the Isolani takes place only in the ‘third act’!

21.♖c5 ♖xc5 22.dxc5 ♗c6

The Isolani is not only a pawn weakness; no, it is also a square weakness. The ‘neighboring’ squares d5, c4, and e4 are difficult to protect, and even the disappearance of the Isolani from the scene cannot do much to alter this fact. Cf. the preliminary discussion to Part IV.

23.f3 f6 24.♔f2 ♔f7 25.♖d4 a5



26.g3

Better seems 26.b3, and if 26…♗d5, then 27.♖d3. After 28.h3 White would surely have had a position that would be difficult to shake.

26…a4 27.f4 h5 28.h3 ♜h8!

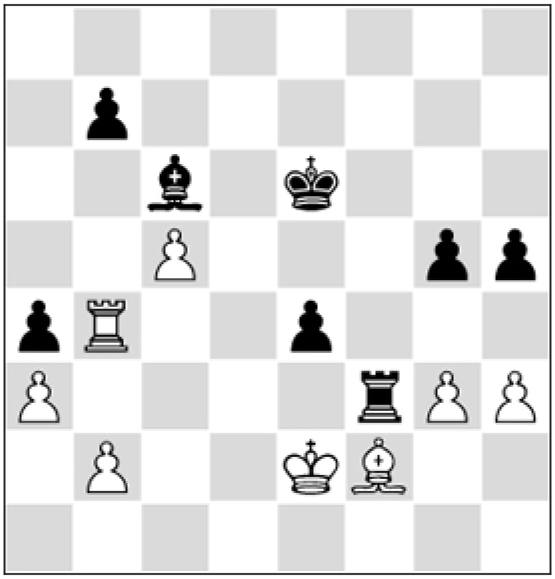
A preventive measure against his opponent’s intended g3-g4.

29.♖d1 ♚g6 30.♖d4 ♚f5 31.♗d2 ♜f8! 32.♗e1 e5 33.fxe5 fxe5 34.♖h4 g5!

35.♖b4

35.♖xh5?? ♔g6+ and wins.

35…♚e6+ 36.♔e2 e4 37.♗f2 ♜f3



Now we have the basis for systematic alternating maneuvers, in that c5 and h3 are already inclined to be weak: after the sequence …h5-h4; gxh4 gxh4; ♗xh4 the c5-square is left unprotected for a moment. But how can this trifling fact be exploited?

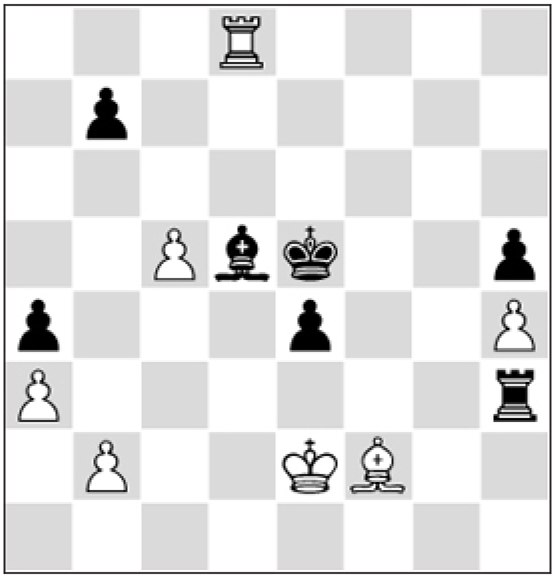
38.♜b6 ♚e5! 39.♜b4 ♚d5

Now a zugzwang position of great piquancy is reached: White has no reasonable move. If 40.♖b6, then 40…h4 41.gxh4 gxh4 42.♗xh4, and now Black plays, first of all, 42…♔xc5, *with an attack on the rook*. (The rook was lured to b6 for this reason.) If, on the other hand, 40.♖d4+, then 40…♔xc5, when 41.♖xe4+ is inadmissible because of 41…♖xf2+.

40.h4

Unwilling to play his rook to b6. Now, however, the black king gets some room on the kingside.

40…gxh4 41.gxh4 ♜h3 42.♜d4+ ♚e5 43.♜d8 ♝d5



The win is not too difficult now; despite the disruptive checks the black army, now melded together into a unified whole, rolls ever closer. The alternating maneuvers now have well-defined targets and enjoy command of impeccable terrain (with the axis at g4, etc.).

The rest requires little comment.

44.♜e8+ ♝e6 45.♜d8

Black threatened 45…♖b3.

45…♚f4 46.♜f8+ ♝f5 47.♜f7 ♜h2

Not 47…e3 because of 48.♗g1!.

48.♜e7 ♝g4+ 49.♚e1

49.♔f1? ♖h1+ 50.♗g1 ♔g3, etc.

49…♚f3 50.♜f7+ ♚g2 51.♚d2 ♚f1! 52.♚e3 ♝f3 53.♝g3 ♜xb2 54.♝d6 ♜b3+ 55.♚d4 ♚f2 56.♜g7 e3 57.♝g3+ ♚f1 58.♜f7 e2 59.♜e7 ♝c6

White resigned.

I count this game among my best, and it is important in demonstrating the weakness of the Isolani in the endgame.

Game 73

Walther von Holzhausen
Aron Nimzowitsch
Hannover 1926 (4)

1.e4 ♞c6 2.♞f3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.exd5 exd5 5.♝g5 ♝e7 6.♝xe7 ♛xe7+ 7.♛e2

Playing for a draw; otherwise 7.♗e2 could be played with an easy conscience; e.g., 7…♕b4+ 8.♘c3!.

7…♝f5 8.c3 ♝e4

With the occupation of this outpost Black initiates play along the e-file.

9.♞bd2 0-0-0 10.0-0-0 ♞h6!

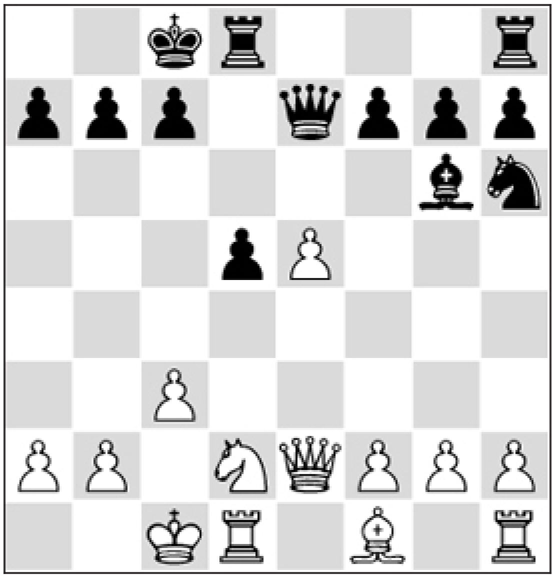
Preventing the otherwise possible freeing move 11.♘e5!, which could have been played after, for instance, 10…♘f6.

11.♞e5

Here we would have given preference to 11.h3; e.g., 11…a6 (else 12.♕b5) 12.♕e3.

11…♞xe5 12.dxe5 ♝g6

Alternating maneuvering play is in the process of preparation. White’s weaknesses are his e5-pawn and the flimsily covered diagonal b1-g6. The maneuvering axis is at the fortified ‘diagonal point’ e4.



13.♘f3 ♜he8 14.♕e3! ♚b8 15.♕f4 ♝e4!

Cf. the preceding note.

16.♖e1

For 16.♗b5 would lose a pawn to 16…♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♕xe5.

16…♕c5 17.♘d2 ♝g6 18.♘b3 ♕b6 19.♕d4 f6 20.f4 fxe5 21.fxe5

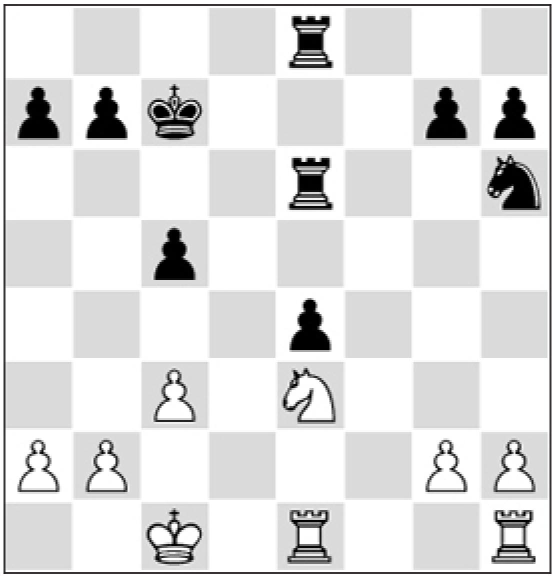
Or 21.♖xe5 ♖xe5 22.♕xe5 ♖e8.

21…♝e4 22.♘d2 c5 23.♕e3

If 23.♕a4, then 23…♖xe5 24.♘xe4 dxe4 25.♖xe4 ♕e6 26.♖xe5 ♕xe5 and wins.

23…♜xe5 24.♕g3 ♕c7 25.♗d3 ♜de8 26.♗xe4 dxe4 27.♘c4 ♜5e6 28.♕xc7+ ♚xc7 29.♘e3!

Now White has set up an excellent blockade position; a win for Black still lies far in the distance.

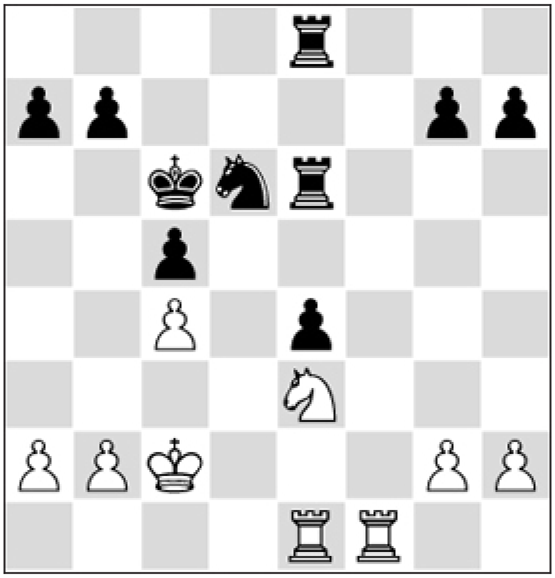


29…♘f7

To centralize the poorly placed knight at d6. The alternative would consist of 29…♖f8 (to take up the struggle for the f-file); e.g., 30.♖hf1 ♖ee8 31.c4 ♔c6 32.♔c2 and now 32…g6!, intending …♘f5. On 33.g4, 34…♖f3 could follow.

It is difficult to say which line of play is the more advantageous.

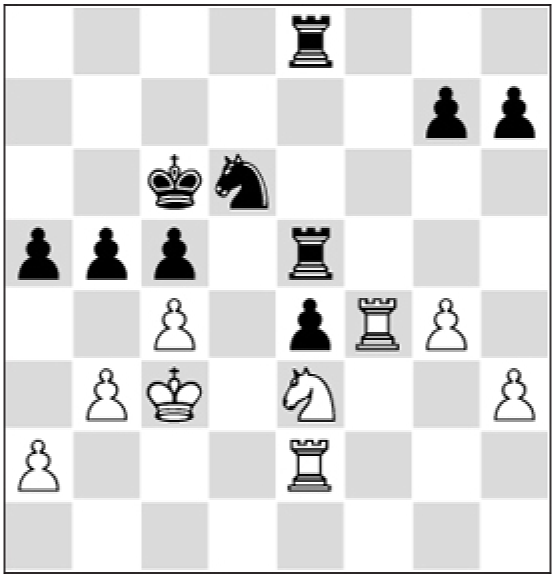
30.♔c2 ♘d6 31.c4 ♔c6 32.♖hf1



32…♖h6!

This move is born of a precise knowledge of the law of alternated maneuvering. Black is relying on the action with …a7-a6 and …b7-b5. He would then have an opportunity – as the white antagonists have their hands full keeping the pawn at e4 under observation – to penetrate into the game by way of the open a- and b-files. With that he would succeed in his goal of creating an axis for alternating maneuvers. But the required ‘two weaknesses’ would still be lacking, for White’s duty to keep watch over e4 constitutes of course only *a single* weakness.
The text maneuver, 32…♖h6, etc., has as its purpose *the creation of a ‘second weakness’*, whose existence will prove to be of decisive importance in the ensuing rook ending.

33.h3 ♖g6 34.♖e2 a6 35.♖f4 b5 36.b3 ♖g5 37.g4 ♖ge5 38.♔c3 a5!



Intending …a5-a4 and a double exchange of pawns, after which nothing more would stand in the way of the rooks infiltrating the white position, say by …♖e5-e7-a7-a3 (or a1).

39.♖ef2 a4 40.bxa4 bxc4!

In making this move Black had to take into consideration the rook endgame that comes about after the 44th move.

41.♖f8 ♖5e7

Not 41…♖xf8, when White’s rook would invade.

42.♖xe8 ♖xe8 43.♘xc4 ♘xc4 44.♔xc4 ♖a8! 45.♖f7

Or 45.♔b3 ♔d5, etc.

45…♜xa4+ 46.♚b3 ♜b4+ 47.♚c3 ♜b7

In this rook ending the loosened king’s flank (the pawns at h3 and g4) constitutes a decisive weakness, as will soon become apparent.

48.♜f5 ♜a7 49.♚c4 ♜a4+ 50.♚b3 ♜d4 51.♜e5 ♚d6 52.♜e8 ♜d3+ 53.♚c4 ♜xh3

Cf. the notes to moves 47 and 32.

54.♜xe4 ♜a3 55.♜e2 ♜a4+ 56.♚b5 ♜xg4 57.a4 ♜b4+ 58.♚a5 h5 59.♜h2 ♚c6 60.♜e2 ♜g4 61.♜e6+ ♚d5 62.♜e8 h4 63.♜d8+ ♚c4 64.♚b6 h3 65.♜d1 ♚b4 66.♜b1+ ♚xa4 67.♚xc5 g5 68.♜h1 ♜g3 69.♚d4 g4 70.♚e4 ♜g2 71.♚f4 h2

White resigned.

In this game the logical connection between ‘alternation’ and the ‘two weaknesses’ stands out most vividly.

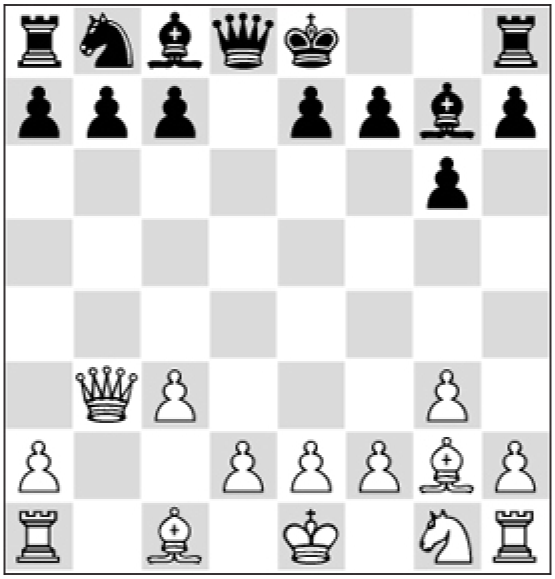
Game 74

Aron Nimzowitsch
Victor Berger
London 1927 (4)

The distinctive feature of the following maneuvering game lies in the fact that the maneuvers are executed as it were only in White’s own camp, on *interior lines*.

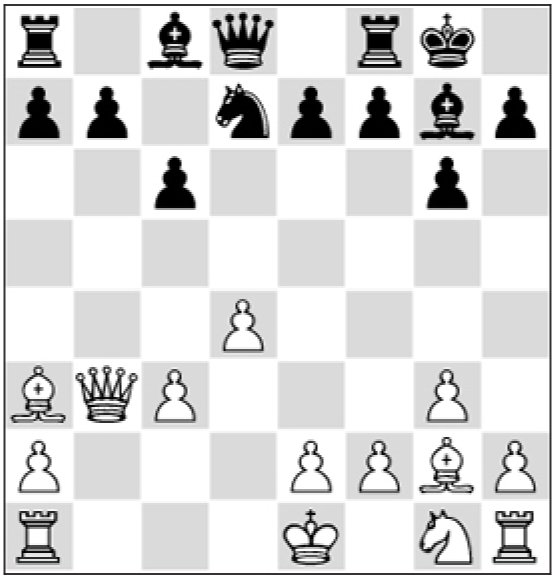
The opening seemingly turned out in White’s favor.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 ♘xc3 5.bxc3 g6 6.♝g2 ♝g7 7.♛b3



If Black had played 6…c7-c5 instead of 6…♗g7 he would have had a comfortable defense here with 7…♕c7.

7…c6 8.d4 0-0 9.♗a3 ♘d7



Suddenly White finds himself in the greatest perplexity, for Black threatens 10…♘b6 followed by …♗e6 and the occupation of the central square c4. What can be found to counter this?

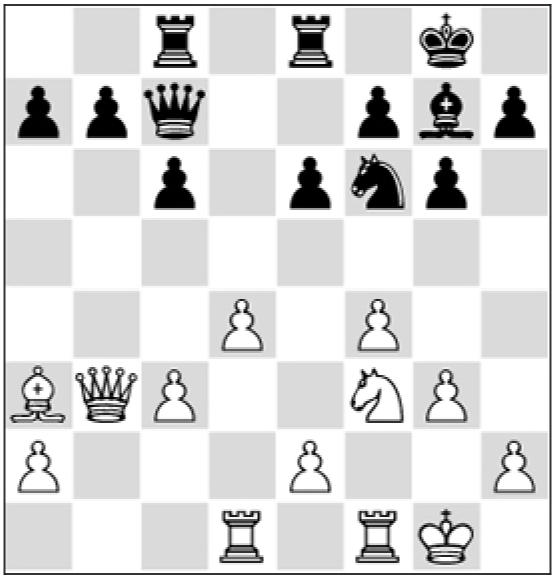
10.♗h3

A drastic preventive measure; White seeks to eliminate the unpleasant bishop at any cost.

10…♖e8 11.f4 ♕c7 12.♘f3 ♘f6 13.♗xc8

13.♘g5 would be another variant.

13…♖axc8 14.0-0 e6 15.♖ad1!



The ‘pile-up’ of the rooks on the d-file is a prophylactic measure directed against …c6-c5; cf. the following note.

15…b6 16.c4 ♖ed8 17.♖d3

Now 17…c5 is to be answered by 18.dxc5, and if then 18…bxc5, White plays 19.♖fd1.

17…♗f8 18.♗b2 ♗g7 19.♗a3 ♗f8 20.♗xf8 ♖xf8 21.♕b2 ♕e7 22.♘e5 ♖fd8 23.♖fd1 ♘e4

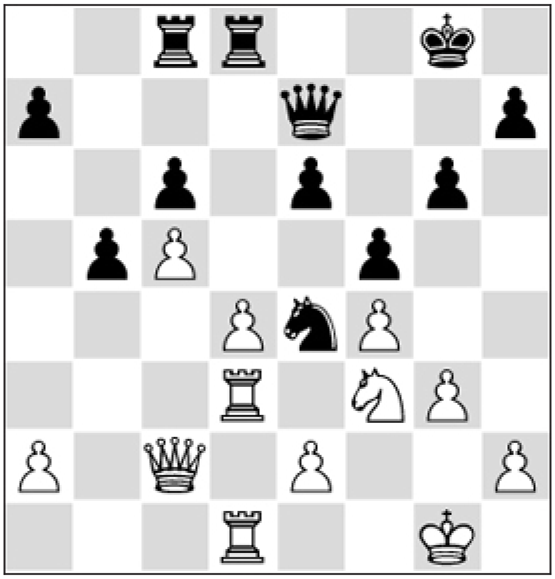
Now that the liberating …c6-c5 has lost almost all its charm, the gifted English master tries another path: a central restraining action gets under way.

24.♕c2 f6 25.♘f3 b5 26.c5

To be considered also was 26.♘d2.

26…f5

Consolidation in the center has now been achieved.



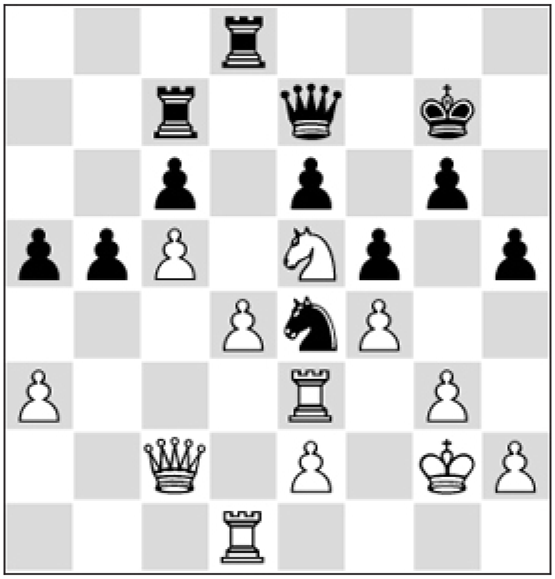
27.♜e3

Coming to grips at once with 27.♘d2 would be rebuffed as follows: 27…♘xd2! 28.♖3xd2 ♖d5 29.e4 fxe4 30.♖e2 (the rooks in front and the queen behind them – this seems to be the best deployment!) 30…♕f6 31.♖xe4, and now the preventive move 31…h5! (directed against g3-g4) and Black is satisfactorily placed.

27…a5 28.♝e5 ♜c7 29.a3 ♚g7 30.♚g2

Intending g3-g4-g5, then h2-h4-h5, etc.

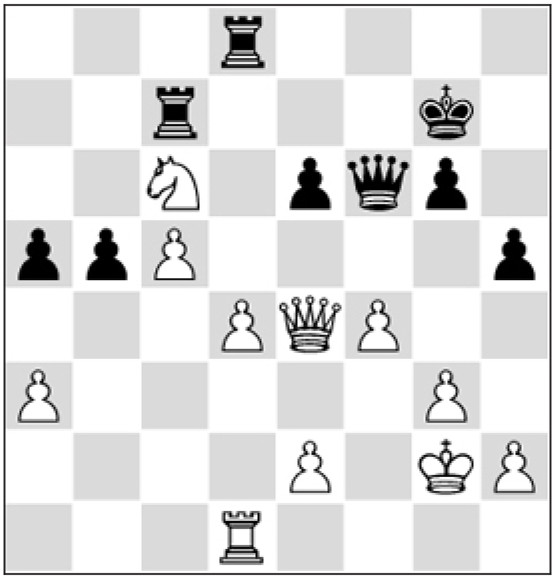
30…h5



31.♖xe4

An obvious exchange sacrifice? Yes, certainly. But in playing it, White, even at this point, had to envisage a defensive plan against the enemy queenside majority, and to be sure this was not easy. I also had to be certain that after the successful containment of said majority I would have to be winning, in that the preconditions for a successful alternating maneuver – known to me – would be present in full measure. We shall soon see how this is to be understood.

31…fxe4 32.♕xe4 ♕f6 33.♘xc6



33…♖d5

The counter-sacrifice 33…♖xc6 34.♕xc6 ♖xd4 would not be sufficient because of the zwischenzug 35.♕c7+, for if now 35…♔h6, there follows 36.♖xd4 ♕xd4 37.♕d6!; but if he plays 35…♔g8, then 36.♖b1; e.g., 36…b4 37.♕xa5, winning.

34.♘e5

If 34.♘xa5, then 34…♖cxc5.

34…♕f5 35.♕d3! ♕xd3

A fork was threatened; e.g., 35…♖cxc5? 36.e4.

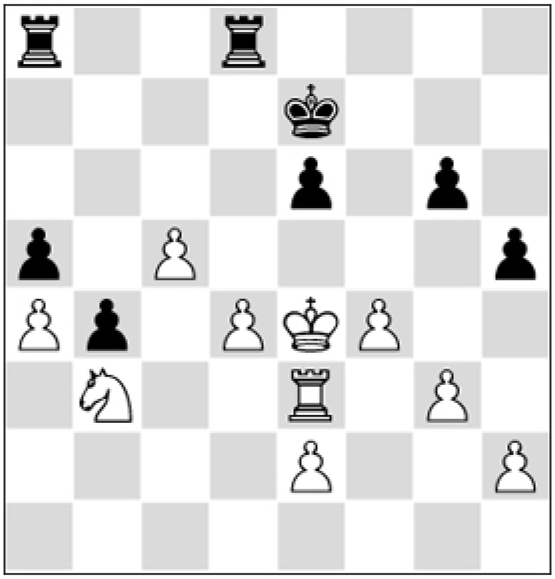
36.♖xd3 ♖d8 37.♔f3 ♖b8 38.♖b3

A ‘blockade dagger’ in another guise.

38…b4 39.a4 ♖d8 40.♔e4 ♖cc8

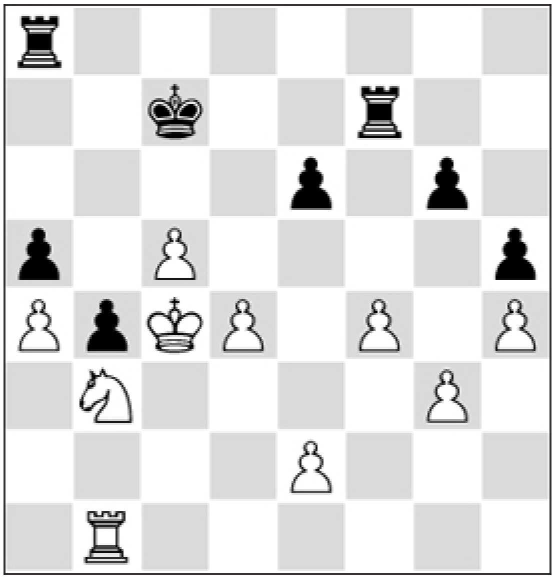
White’s main and final threat obviously consists of his intention to create two connected passed pawns, for instance by posting the king on c4 and following up with e2-e4 and d4-d5. But the plan to put the king at c4 would have to confront serious difficulties; e.g., the immediate 41.♔d3? would be a gross blunder because of 41…♖xc5. Hence the king can reach this post only after protracted alternating maneuvers.

41.♘c4 ♖a8 42.♖e3 ♔f6 43.♘d2 ♔e7 44.♘b3



Revealing the plan of maneuver: the blockade square b3 is to be occupied by turns by the knight and rook, while the piece that remains mobile at any time will undertake various attacks. On move 55 we then arrive at the ‘starting position’, i.e., the same position as after Black’s 40th move, with the important difference that the white king has occupied the much-desired square c4.

44…♖a6 45.♔d3 ♖d5 46.h4 ♖a8 47.♔c4 ♔d7 48.♖d3 ♔c7 49.♖d1 ♖d7 50.♖g1 ♖f7 51.♖b1!



The sealed move: the changing of the guard!

51…♔b7

The breakthrough with 51…g5 would be inadequate; we note in passing the exceptionally fine parry 52.♖g1!.

52.♘d2 ♔c6 53.♘f3 ♔c7 54.♘e5 ♖g7 55.♖b3! ♖b8 56.e4

Clear the field for battle!

56…♖gg8 57.d5 exd5+ 58.exd5 ♖ge8 59.d6+ ♔d8 60.♔d5 ♖b7 61.c6

Black resigned.

Game 75

Aron Nimzowitsch

Oskar Antze

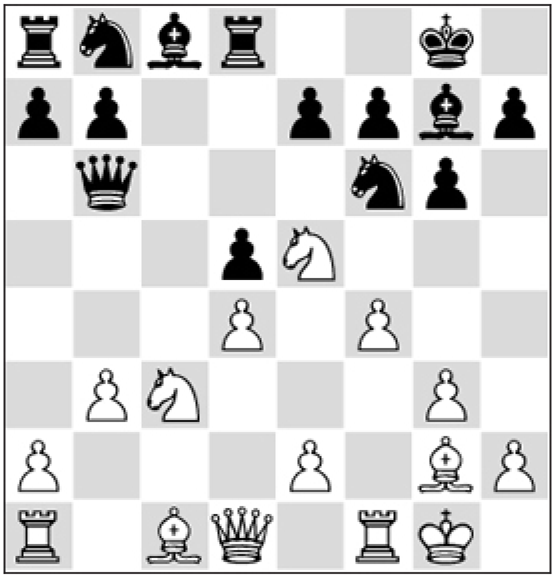
Hannover 1926 (5)

Here, again, the alternating maneuvers proceed against ‘weaknesses’ of an *original* character. The ‘maneuverer’ – White – threatened to carry out a *defensive maneuver* that would have led to the complete elimination of any possible counterplay. In his attempt to forestall this maneuver Black went down to defeat at the hands of the ‘second weakness’.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.f4 d6 6.♘f3 c6!

Planning the subsequent thrust …d6-d5 !

7.0-0 d5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♘e5 ♕b6 10.♘c3 ♖d8 11.b3!



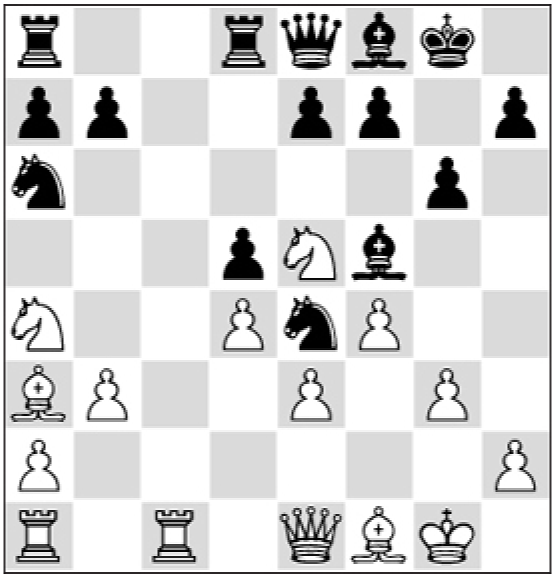
11…♘a6

On 11…♘c6 the combination 12.♗a3! ♘xd4 13.♘a4 ♘xe2++ 14.♔h1 ♕a6 15.♗f3 would have followed.

12.♗a3 ♗f8 13.♘a4 ♕b5 14.♕d3 ♕a5

Trading the queens would have been simpler.

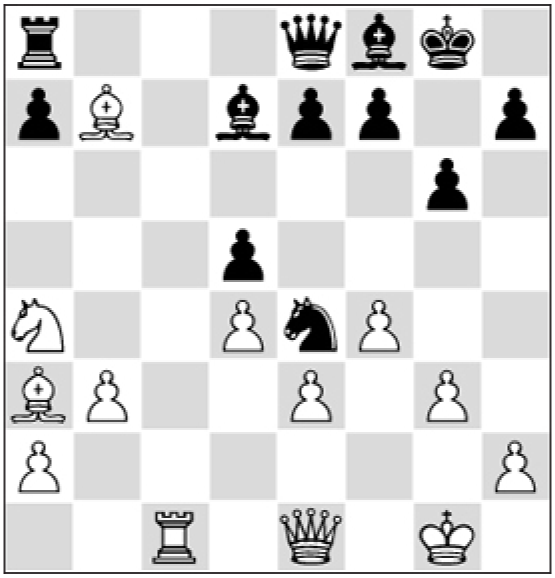
15.♖fc1 ♗f5 16.♕c3 ♕b5 17.♗f1 ♘e4 18.♕e1 ♕e8 19.e3



The first player has succeeded in putting the enemy queen off the triangle b6, b5, and a5, but now Black could have played for the …e7-

e5 advance even so with 19…f6 20.♘f3 ♗g4. He omits this, and instead commits an error that should have led to a fairly quick decision.

19…b5? 20.♞c6 ♜dc8 21.♝xb5 ♝d7 22.♝xa6 ♜xc6 23.♝b7 ♜xc1 24.♜xc1



24…♜d8

If 24…♖b8, then 25.♗xd5 ♘f6 26.♗f3 ♗xa4 27.bxa4 ♕xa4 28.♕c3 and perhaps 29.♗c6 to follow, with a game that is easily won.

25.♞c5

Here, too, 25.♗xd5 would have been strong; e.g., 25…♘xg3 26.hxg3 ♗xa4 27.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 28.bxa4 ♕xa2 29.♕c3, with an eventual exchange of queens, after which the ending would be easily won.

25…♝c8 26.♝xc8

26.♗xd5 could be considered.

26…♜xc8 27.♛a5 e6 28.♞xe4 dxe4 29.♜xc8 ♛xc8 30.♝c5 ♝xc5

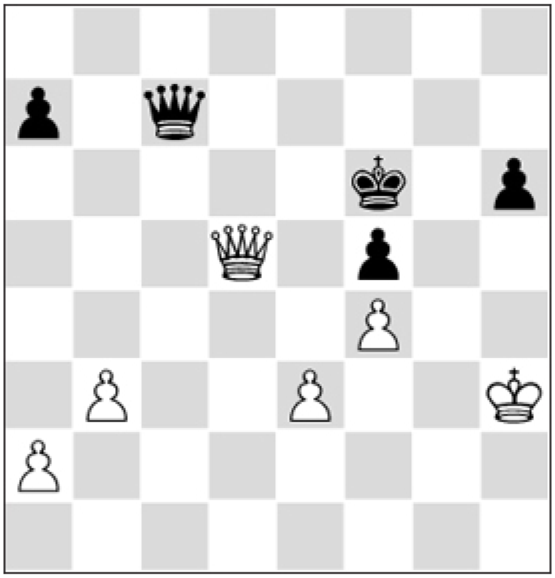
31.♛xc5?

With this gross ‘fatigue-blunder’ White nearly gives away the whole game. 31.dxc5 would have led to the striking of weapons in a few moves. If then 31…♕d7, which looks unpleasant for White, there would follow 32.♕c3! ♕d1+ 33.♔f2 ♕f3+ 34.♔e1, with a ready escape to a3 and a quick decision. After his mistake White has to win the game a second time.

31…♕a6! 32.♕c2 ♕a5 33.♔f2 ♕h5 34.♕xe4 ♕xh2+ 35.♕g2 ♕h5 36.g4 ♕a5 37.♔g3 h6

37…♕c3 looks better.

38.♕f2 ♕c7 39.♔h3 f5 40.gxf5 gxf5 41.d5 exd5 42.♕g2+ ♔f7 43.♕xd5+ ♔f6



Now we get to see very protracted maneuvering play. Representing weaknesses in Black’s position are:

a) the queenside, where White threatens to create a passed pawn;

b) the kingside, where White’s king threatens to penetrate by way of h5; also, backward checks will prove annoying for Black as he will be forced into uncomfortable moves to cover his isolated f- and h-pawns;

c) the white queen threatens to occupy a central position, perhaps d4, with a subsequent escape of the white king (cf. the note to move 65). Black’s counter-chances lie in repeated checks against the weakly protected enemy king, and further in his passed h-pawn.

44.♕d4+ ♔g6 45.♕d2 ♔f6 46.♕b2+ ♔g6 47.b4 ♕c4 48.♕d2 ♔h5 49.a4 a6 50.♔g3 ♕g8+

Only a little, unprepossessing king move (♔g3) and already Black sees himself compelled to make use of defensive measures on the kingside as well. This compulsory reaction, taken even at the merest hint of a threat, is characteristic of the situation before us.

51.♔h2 ♕c4 52.♕b2 ♕d3 53.♕g2 ♕c4

53…♕xe3?? 54.♕h3+.

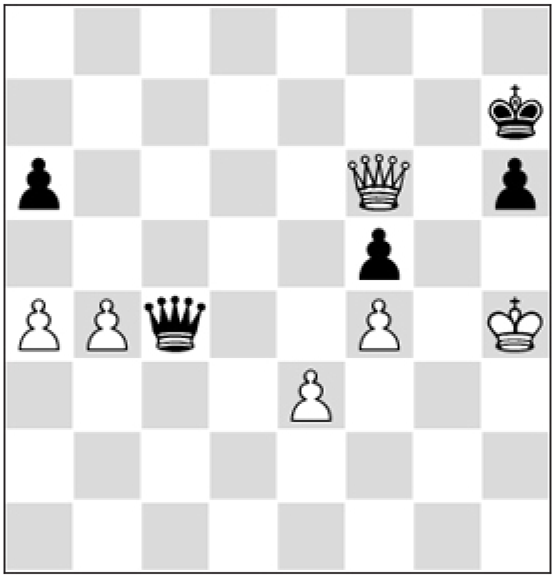
54.♚g3 ♕g8+

We prefer 54…♕d3.

55.♚h3 ♕c4 56.♕f3+ ♚g6 57.♚h4 ♚g7

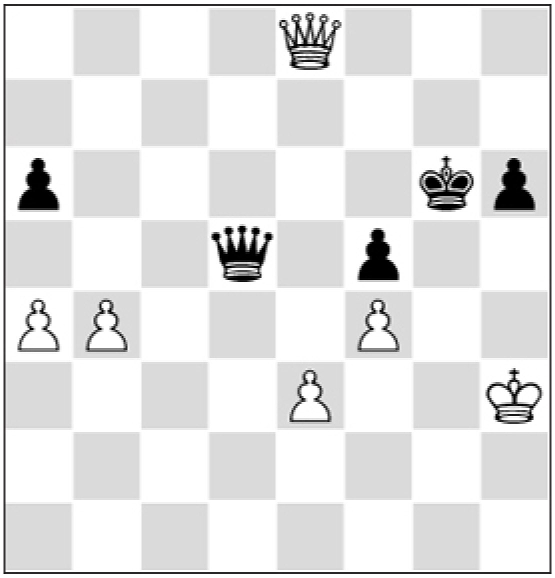
If 57…♕xb4, then 58.♕c6+ and 59.♔h5.

58.♕b7+ ♚g6 59.♕b6+ ♚h7 60.♕f6!



With the conquest of this important point White has made considerable progress.

60…♕d5 61.♚g3 ♕g8+ 62.♚h2 ♕a2+ 63.♚h3 ♕d5 64.♕e7+ ♚g6 65.♕e8+!



The e8-square is of still greater importance than f6.

65…♚h7

After this White can make the winning move a4-a5 without danger. But even after 65…♔f6 66.♔g3 ♕d3! (best) 67.a5!, too, the danger would not be all that great; e.g., 67…♕f1 (if 67…♕b1, then 68.♕c6+ and 69.♕b7+ and 70.♕xa6, as in the game) 68.♕e5+ ♔g6 69.♕e6+ ♔g7 70.♕xf5 ♕g1+ 71.♔f3 ♕f1+ 72.♔e4 ♕c4+ 73.♔e5 ♕b5+ 74.♔e6 and wins. This is an illustration of the second player’s defensive threats, which we have mentioned more than once.

66.♚g3 ♛b3 67.a5!

The simplest, for now the threat 68.b5 has a weighty effect. Another possibility was offered by the variation 67.♕d7+ ♔g6 68.♕c6+ ♔h7 69.♕b7+ ♔g8 70.♕b8+ ♔h7 71.♕a7+ ♔g8 and now 72.♔h4, as before.

67…♛b1

Better was 67…♕d3, after which the winning continuation would be none too simple; e.g., 68.♕f7+ ♔h8 69.♕f6+ ♔h7 70.♕d4!. Now there are two variations, depending on whether the queen goes to b1 or f1. In either case 71.♕d7+ follows, when White wins the *in both cases unprotected* a- or f-pawn. For instance, 70…♕b1 71.♕d7+ ♔g6 72.♕c6+ ♔g7 73.♕b7+ ♔f8 74.♕xa6, as in the game, or 70…♕f1 71.♕d7+ ♔g6 72.♕e6+ ♔g7 73.♕xf5, with a subsequent king flight as indicated in the note to Black’s 65th move. So after a sufficiently long period of alternating maneuvers we see the pawn weaknesses topple down, each in turn – a victory for the logic of alternated maneuvering!

68.♛d7+ ♚g6 69.♛c6+ ♚g7 70.♛b7+ ♚f8 71.♛xa6 ♛e1+ 72.♚f3 ♛d1+ 73.♛e2 ♛d5+ 74.♚f2 ♛d8 75.a6 ♛h4+ 76.♚g2 ♛e7 77.♛f3 ♛c7 78.b5 ♛g7+ 79.♚f2 ♛b2+ 80.♛e2 ♛a1 81.b6

Black resigned.

White’s defensive threat – an escape by the king after establishing security in the center – had a lasting influence on the course of the game. A position typical of this theme is as follows – White: king at g3, queen at d4; pawns on a5, e3, and f4; Black: king on g6, queen at h1, pawns on f5 and h6. White plays ♔f2!, the king escaping to the queenside.

It remains to locate the axis as such of the alternating maneuvers: on inspection this has to be the diagonal d4-f6. The main variation also convinces us of this (that is, with 67…♕d3! instead of the clearly weaker 67…♕b1), with the *retreat* of the queen from f8 to f6 and d4. A most instructive ending for understanding the alternating strategy.

We conclude this section by presenting two endgame finishes.

Game 76

Aron Nimzowitsch

Strange Petersen

Copenhagen 1928

After a most tenacious defense on the part of my youthful opponent, a completely level ending arose:

1.b3 d5 2.♝b2 ♝f5 3.e3 e6 4.f4 ♞f6 5.♞f3 ♞bd7 6.g3 ♝d6 7.♝g2 ♛e7 8.0-0 e5

Played with a delightful uninhibitedness!

9.fxe5 ♞xe5 10.♞xe5 ♝xe5 11.d4 ♝g4 12.♛d3 ♝d6 13.c4 c6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♞c3 ♝e6 16.♛b5+ ♛d7 17.e4

Better was first 17.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 and only then 18.e4.

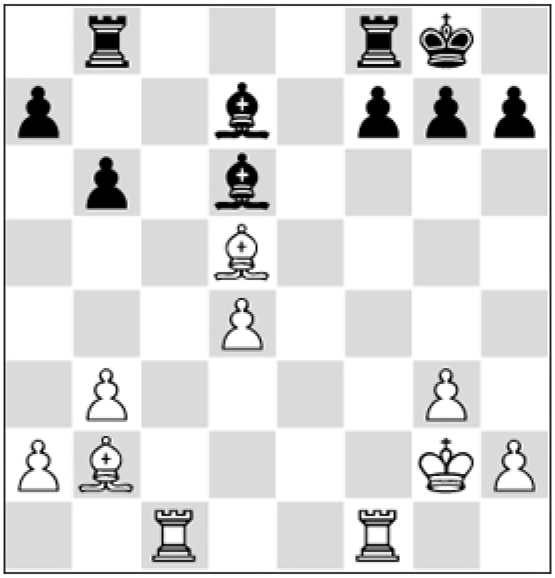
17…dxe4 18.♛xd7+ ♝xd7

For now there is no need for Black to engage his king.

19.♞xe4 ♞xe4 20.♝xe4 ♜b8 21.♝d5 0-0 22.♚g2!

A preventive move against the constricting …♗h3.

22…b6 23.♜ac1



23…♖bc8

Play down the e-file was rather more advisable; e.g., 23…♖be8 followed by …♗e6 and …♖e7.

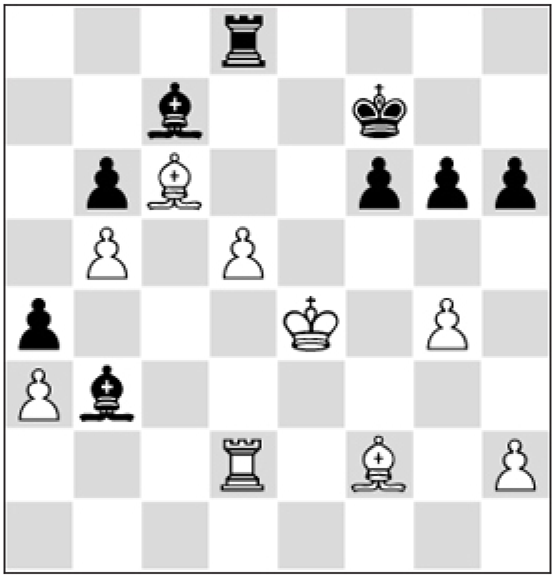
24.♖xc8! ♗xc8 25.♗c6!

To be followed by d4-d5, when the pawn on d5 and the bishop on c6 would form a nice cloverleaf.

25…♖d8 26.♖c1 ♔f8 27.d5 ♗a6 28.♖e1 f6 29.♖e4 ♗c8 30.♖a4 a6 31.♗c3 ♔f7 32.♗e1 h6 33.b4 ♗c7 34.b5 a5

Now the bishop on c6 is firmly secured, but it is also somewhat cut off from the game.

35.♗f2 ♔f8 36.♖e4 ♔f7 37.♖c4 ♗f5 38.g4 ♗b1 39.a3 ♗a2 40.♖d4 ♗b3 41.♖d2 a4 42.♔f3 g6 43.♔e4



Black’s vulnerabilities in this position are less a matter of his pawns and more a question of his weak squares. The latter are positioned almost exclusively along the e-file, and White could strive to take control of either e6 or e5; e.g., 43.♗g3, to trade off the bishops, then ♔d4, and lastly ♖e2-e6. Or 43.h4 and g4-g5; after …hxg5; hxg5 f5+ there follows ♔f3 and ♗f2-e3-f4, trading off the bishops and playing ♔e5.

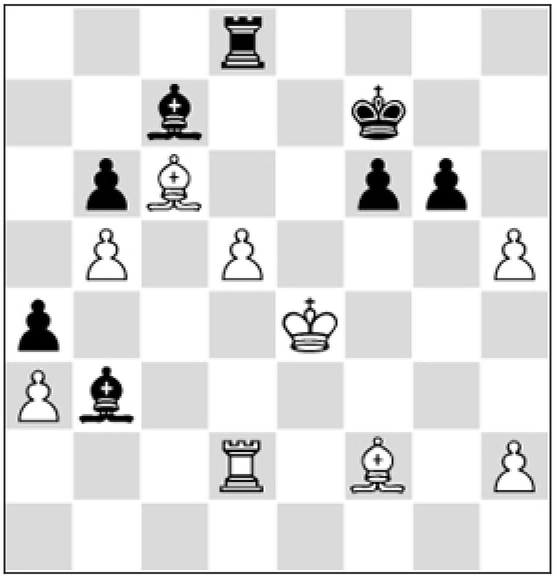
43…h5

He fails to come up with the right plan. He should have played 43…g5, after which the attack against e5 would have been nipped in the bud and the assault on e6 could be warded off as follows: (43…g5!) 44.♗g3 ♗d6 45.♗xd6 ♖xd6 46.♔d4 ♔f8 47.♖e2 ♔f7 and White cannot make progress (48.♖e8? ♖xc6!).

If after 43…g5! White tries 44.♗d4, Black simply plays 44…♗c4 45.♖f2 ♖d6 (46.♗e5? ♖xc6).

After 43…g5 any win for White is simply an impossibility, as he has one less bishop in the game and the pawn at d5 is in need of protection. He is strong down the e-file, certainly, but this by itself is not enough to win!

44.gxh5



44…f5+

After 44…gxh5 the method indicated above would now lead to the goal, as h5 would then be our ‘second weakness’; e.g., 45.♗g3 ♗d6 46.♗xd6 ♖xd6 47.♔d4 ♔f8 48.♖e2 ♔f7 and now 49.♖e3!, e.g., 49…♗d1 50.♗e8+ ♔f8 51.♗g6 ♗b3 52.♖e8+ ♔g7 53.♗e4, winning.

45.♚f3 g5

Or 45…gxh5 46.♗h4 ♖d6 47.♗g3 f4 48.♗xf4 ♖f6 49.d6.

46.♝g3 ♝d6

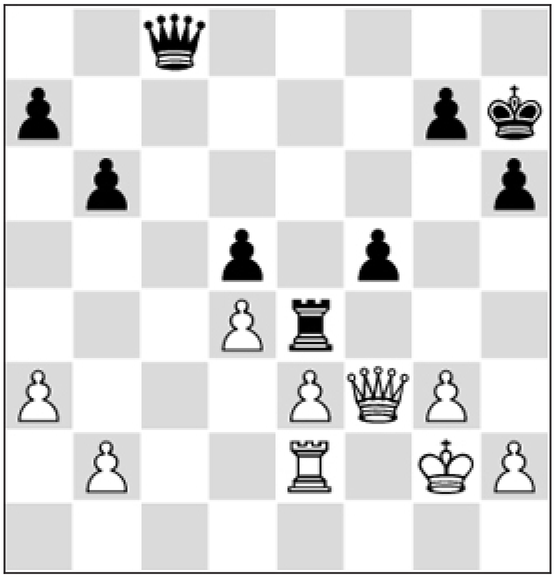
If 46…f4, then of course 47.♗f2 and h2-h4, etc.

47.♝xd6 ♜xd6 48.♚g3 ♚g7 49.h4 ♚h6 50.hxg5+ ♚xg5 51.♚f3 ♚xh5 52.♚f4 ♚g6 53.♚e5 ♜d8 54.d6 ♚f7 55.♜f2 ♝e6 56.♜f4…

1-0

Game 77

Erich Cohn
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1911 (7)



63…a5

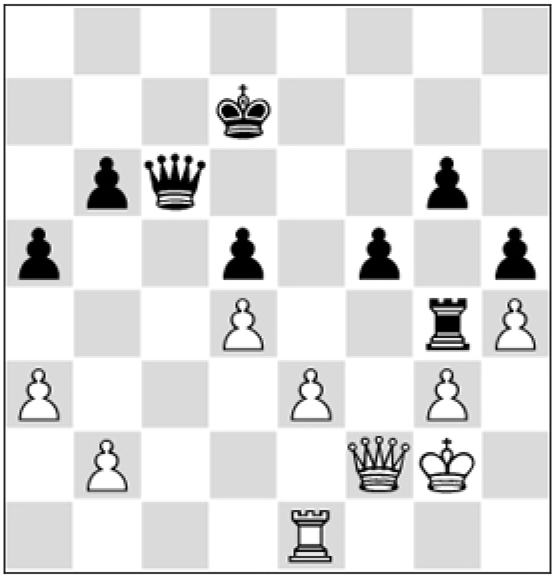
To provide a safe place for the king at a7!

64.h4 ♚g6 65.♔h2 h5 66.♔g2 ♚h6 67.♖f2 g6 68.♖f1 ♚g7

Beginning the journey to a7.

69.♖f2 ♚f7 70.♔h2 ♚e7 71.♖e2 ♛c1 72.♕f2 ♚d7 73.♖e1 ♛c6 74.♔g2 ♜g4

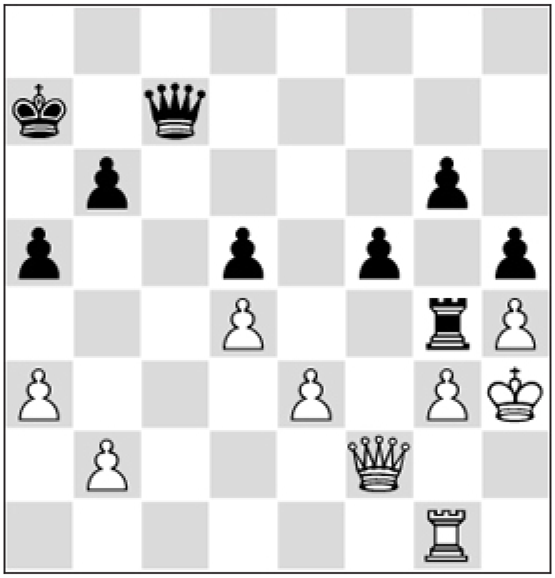
The massaging by turns of the enemy weaknesses is of course one of the most reliable methods in the strategy of alternation; besides this, 74…♚c7 could have been played at once.



75.♖f1

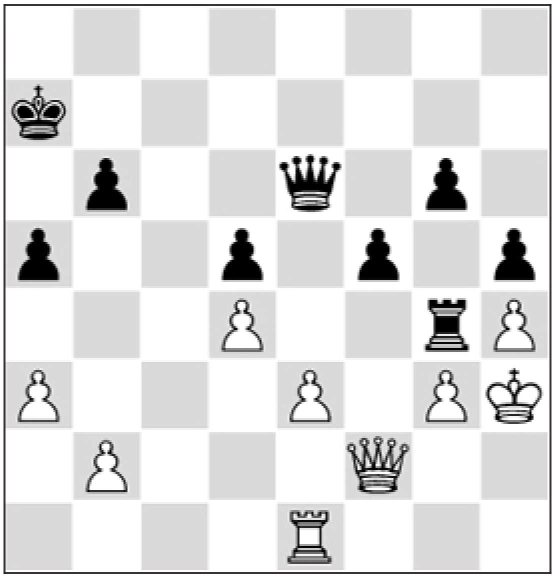
If 75.♖e2 (to make …♔c7 more difficult) then perhaps 75…♖e4 76.♔h2 ♕c1 77.♔g2 ♕d1 78.♔h2 ♕d3 and the black king gets to a7, after which matters take their course.

75…♕c7 76.♕f3 ♔c8 77.♕f2 ♔b8 78.♔h3 ♔a7 79.♖g1



White has to be mindful of the possibility …g6-g5; he has to take into account a number of threats. No wonder that things go awry for him in the end.

79…♕d7 80.♔h2 ♕d6 81.♔h3 ♕c6 82.♖e1 ♕e6 83.♔h2 ♕e4 84.♔h3 ♕e6



This maneuvering to and fro has not only a psychological value but to a greater extent should be understood as a sizing-up of the terrain to establish *elastic* lines of communication. The idea is this: will the opponent be able to keep pace with the speed of the regrouping of Black’s forces?

85.♚h2 ♛e7 86.♚h3 ♛e4 87.♜g1 ♛e6 88.♚h2 ♜e4 89.♜c1

On 89.♖e1, Cohn feared the breakthrough 89…g5 90.hxg5 h4; e.g., 91.gxh4 f4 92.g6 f3, with dangerous and threatening complications. The reader may verify whether this fear was well founded.

89…♜xe3 90.♛f4 ♜e2+ 91.♚h3 ♚a6 92.b4 axb4 93.axb4 ♚b5 94.♜c7 ♛e4 95.♛xe4 ♜xe4 96.♜g7 ♜e6 97.♜d7 ♚c4 98.♚g2 ♚xd4 99.♚f3 ♚c4 100.b5 d4

0-1

It may be that the Logos of this win does not stand out with all the clarity that we should prefer, but one thing is certain: the difficulties that the defending side had to overcome were so great that the suggestions given in the tournament book that the game should have been ‘agreed drawn’ in our opinion simply do not come into consideration.

With this we conclude Part V.

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Part VI

Forays Through the Old and New Lands of Hypermodern Chess

First, we must rebut the erroneous supposition that this final part is hypermodern *in contrast to* the first five parts. No, the first five are also thoroughly hypermodern. Thus 'restraint' and especially 'over-protection' can almost be regarded as a vanguard of hypermodernism, for these constructions of mine – indeed, what constructions in *My System* are not of my own making? – still await recognition and have not been accepted.

So it was with my philosophy of the center and various other principles of my system – a considerable period had to elapse before they were incorporated into hypermodern theory.

Hence we cannot speak of any sort of contrast. Rather, the idea underlying this sixth part is our wish to provide various little suggestions, but also at our leisure to assess the value of the initial revolutionary achievements.

We continue to regard the pseudo-classical school (the Tarrasch period) as the formalistic trend in chess, while we are inclined to see in the hypermodern school a striving to behold the *inner* truth of the game. Often there is only a slight shade of difference between the two, but this suffices to show us events in a new, warm, and true light (instead of the 'cold' and 'spurious' light of the formalistic period).

One example will suffice. My postulate, which we give in section 3 of this part, holds that a strong central position allows for diversions on the flanks, even with objectives that as yet remain obscure. If this 'strong central position' were to be understood in the sense of the formalistic school – hence, with at least the same number of center pawns as the opponent and just as far advanced – the whole idea would be fallacious and spurious, just as it would be if we omitted the nuance of ‘obscure objectives’. For it is just in this that the main point lies – that in the example referred to we speak in all seriousness of an attack ‘into the blue’.

Having said this, let us proceed to the analysis of the individual components of Part VI.

1. On the thesis of the relative harmlessness of the pawn roller

This stratagem, first made use of in 1911 by the author of this book, soon proved to be a quite fruitful one. From the original game, with the opening moves 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6!! (Spielmann-Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1911), the variations 1.d4 ♘c6 (Bogoljubow) and 1.e4 ♘f6 (Alekhine), *inter alia*, have developed. Nowadays, provoking a pawn advance ranks with the most popular and best known methods of play, and this is familiar to every player in any minor tournament almost as much as it is to the discoverer himself. So in 1911 all this was still virgin territory; today already, it belongs to the ‘ancient land’ of hypermodernism.

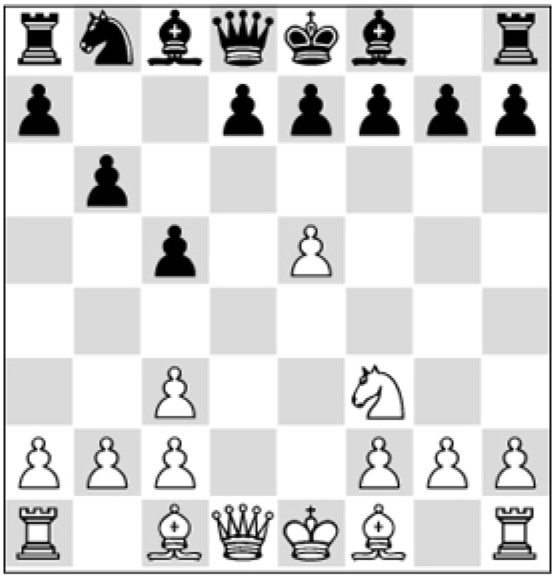
Game 78

Reginald Michell
Aron Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925 (12)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3! ♘xc3

Safer is 4…e6. 4…♘b6 is also a possibility.

5.dxc3 b6



A conception of ‘hypermodern’ boldness. Black artificially retards his own development so that his opponent will show his cards prematurely – a most daring and risky embarkation. More correct seems 5…d5; e.g., 6.exd6 exd6, with a tenable d-pawn.

6.♝d3

More energetic is 6.♗c4 e6 7.♗f4, followed by ♕d2 and ♖d1 or 0-0-0.

6…♝b7 7.♝f4 ♛c7

Black temporizes further (cf. the note to the fifth move) and holds castling on either side in reserve, as well as all possible pawn configurations – and in addition hopes for omissions on the part of his opponent.

8.♝g3

We prefer 8.♕e2.

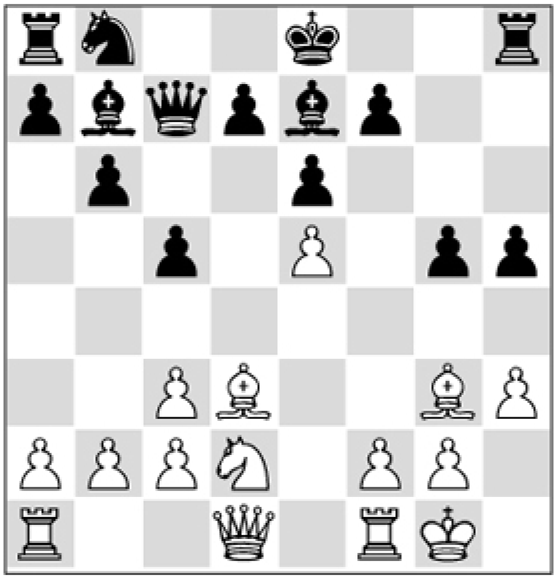
8…e6 9.0-0 ♝e7 10.♞d2!

An excellent centralizing plan; he now threatens ♘d2-c4-d6, disturbing his opponent’s development.

10…h5

A counter that is decidedly suspect, for a diversion on the wing is seldom of sufficient strength to neutralize an enemy attack in the center. Hence either 10…♘c6 or 10…d5 deserved preference.

11.h3 g5



12.♗e4?

Why in all the world does he defer ♘c4 and ♘d6+? Let us analyse: 12.♘c4 b5 13.♘d6+ ♗xd6 14.exd6 ♕c6 15.f3 f5? 16.♗e5 ♖g8 17.♕e2 and wins (17…c4 18.♗xf5 exf5 19.♗f6+ ♔f7 20.♕e7+ ♔g6 21.♗xg5, with a winning attack). Or 12.♘c4 ♘c6 13.♘d6+ ♗xd6 14.exd6 ♕d8 15.♕e2 ♕f6 16.♗e4, with the superior game in the center. Or, finally, 12.♘c4 ♘a6 13.♕e2 0-0-0 14.♘a5, eliminating the attacking bishop on b7 and maintaining the better pawn structure.

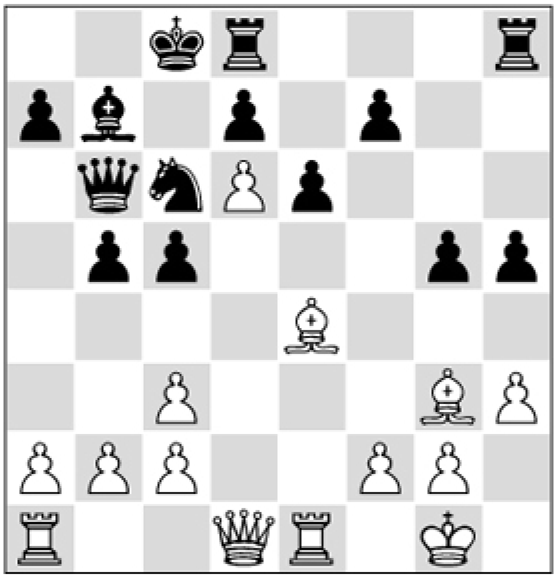
12…♘c6 13.♖e1 0-0-0 14.♘c4

Now this attack fizzles out harmlessly.

14…b5!

Creating a place for the queen on b6.

15.♘d6+ ♗xd6 16.exd6 ♕b6



17.♗f3

With this, White lets slip what remained of his central superiority. Correct was 17.♗e5, although Black could have fished in troubled waters with 17…f5 18.♗xh8 ♖xh8 19.♗d3 g4 (e.g., 20.h4 g3, when 21.fxg3 would cost a piece after 21…c4+). But after 19.♗xc6 (instead of 19.♗d3) 19…♕xc6 20.f3 g4 21.♖e5 or 21.♖e3 we rather prefer White.

After the weaker text move, Black's flank attack comes to dominate the board.

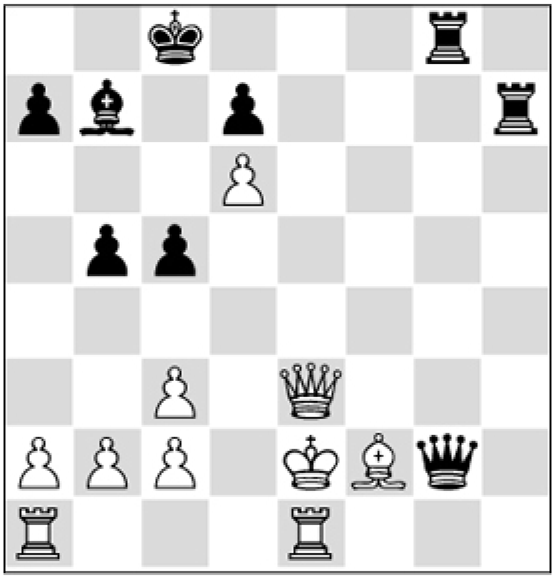
17…g4! 18.hxg4 hxg4 19.♗xg4 f5 20.♗f3 ♜h7 21.♚f1 e5! 22.♗xc6

There is nothing else against the double threat of 22…e4 and 22…f4.

22…♛xc6 23.f3 e4 24.fxe4 ♜g8 25.♗f2 fxe4 26.♛d2

Threatening 27.♕e3, with a blockade.

26…e3! 27.♛xe3 ♛xg2+ 28.♚e2



28…♜f7

With the cute threat 29…♖xf2+ 30.♕xf2 ♖e8+ 31.♔d1 and now, first, 31…♗f3+ (not the immediate 31… ♕xf2 because of 32.♖xe8#), winning.

29.♚d1

Threatening mate at e8.

29…♚b8 30.♜g1 ♜xf2!

A decisive queen sacrifice.

31.♜xg2 ♜fxg2

Even stronger than 31…♖gxg2.

32.b3 ♜g1+

And Black won easily:

33.♚d2 ♜8g2+ 34.♚d3 ♜xa1 35.♛xc5 ♜d1+ 36.♚e3 ♜e1+ 37.♚d3

If 37.♔f4, then 37…♖f1+ 38.♔e3 ♖f3+ 39.♔d4 ♖g4+ 40.♔e5 ♖e4#.

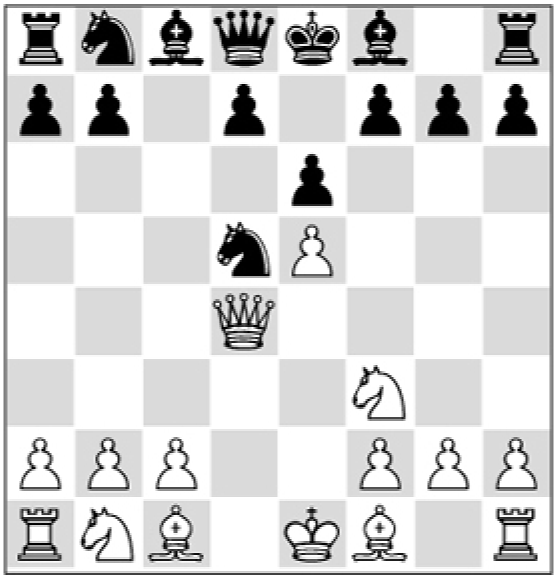
37…♝e4+ 38.♚d4 ♜d2+ 39.♚e5 ♜d5+ 40.♛xd5 ♝h1+

0-1

Game 79

Verner Nielsen
Aron Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1928

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 cxd4 5.♕xd4 e6



6.♗d3

Schlechter played 6.♗c4 against me (San Sebastian 1912). There followed: 6…♘c6 7.♕e4 d6! 8.exd6 ♘f6 9.♕h4 ♗xd6 10.♘c3 ♘e5! (emphasizing White’s inferiority in the center, arising from the untimely diversions of the queen) 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗d3 ♕d4! (to respond to 14.♕h3 with a sound pawn sacrifice, that is, 14…♕g4 15.♗xh7+ ♔h8 16.♗f5+ ♕xh3 17.♗xh3 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 e5, with advantage to Black) 14.♕xd4 ♗xd4 (Dr. Tarrasch regards this position as even, a view that we are unable to share: Black seems far better centralized) 15.♘b5 ♗c5 16.♗f4 ♗d7 17.♖ad1 a6 18.♗d6 (better is 18.♘c3) 18…♖fc8 19.♗xc5 ♗xb5 20.♗d4 ♗xd3 21.♖xd3!! (here, Schlechter’s wonderful feeling for chess is shown: he would rather lose a pawn than allow the centralizing 21…♘d5) 21…♖xc2 22.♖b3 b5 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♖d1 ♖ac8 25.♔f1 f5 (at this point, Dr. Tarrasch recommends 25…♖8c5; yet if Schlechter had responded with the calm 26.♔g1 – when, if 26…♖f5, then 27.♖f1 – the win would have been just as difficult) 26.♔e1 ♖8c4 27.♖d2 and Schlechter obtained a draw on the 79*th* move, a highly creditable result considering the pawn minus.

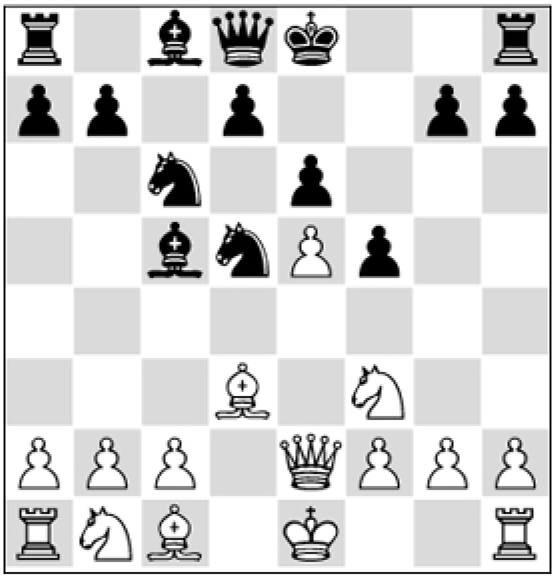
6…♘c6 7.♕e4 f5

On the hunt for hypermodern pawn configurations; otherwise 7…d6 or 7… ♘bd4 could have been played.

8.♕e2

With 8.exf6 ♘xf6 9.♕e2 the ‘hanging pawns’ would have resulted.

8…♗c5



Already at this point the position is being scanned for central points (d4). The more careful 8…♗e7 would hold less appeal for us.

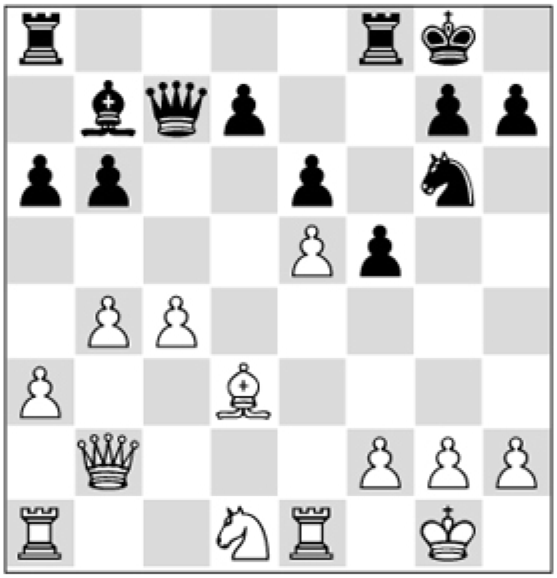
9.0-0 0-0 10.a3 ♕c7

Not 10…a5, which would needlessly weaken b5.

11.c4 ♘de7 12.b4 ♘d4

Cf. the note to Black’s 8th move.

13.♘xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗b2 ♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♘g6 16.♖e1 b6 17.♘c3 a6 18.♘d1 ♗b7



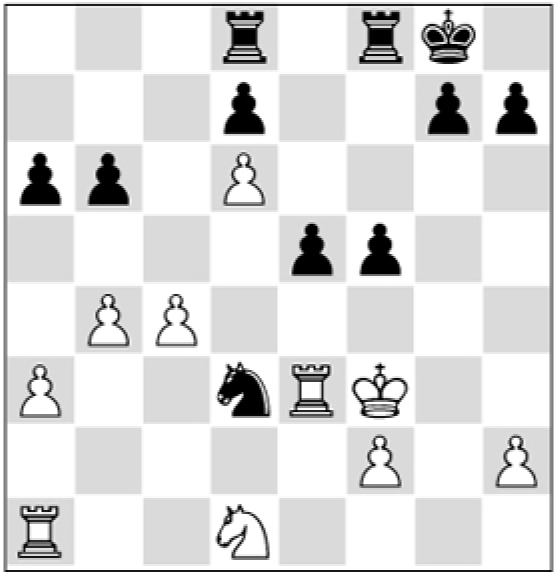
19.♕d4

Greater chances of consolidation would have been afforded by 19.f3 followed by ♗f1 and ♘f2.

19…♖ad8 20.♕d6

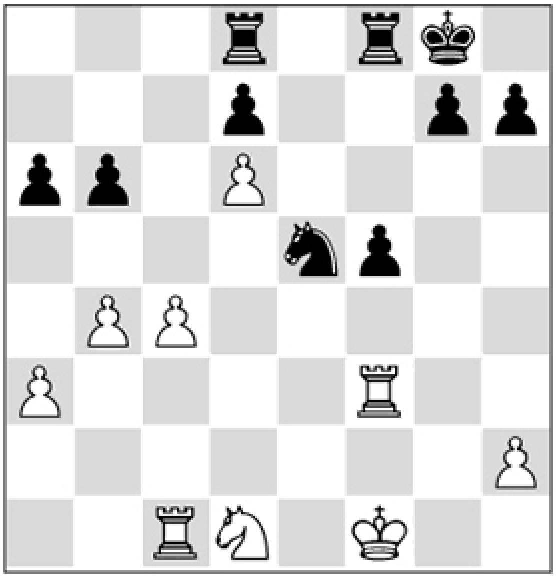
Overlooking Black's 24th move. With 20.c5 the balance could have been preserved.

20…♕xd6 21.exd6 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♘f4+ 23.♔f3 ♘xd3 24.♖e3 e5



The endgame is won for Black, but the remainder is of considerable interest.

25.♚g2 ♞f4+ 26.♚f1 e4 27.f3 exf3 28.♜xf3 ♞g6 29.♜c1 ♞e5



What is of interest here is the superb coordination of Black’s passed pawn and knight. At one point a position is reached with the pawn on f5 and the knight at g4; at another stage we see the pawn at f4 and the knight on e3. That is, at every juncture the position of the knight emphasizes the fact of the terrain that has been won through the advance of the pawn.

30.♜e3 ♞g4 31.♜e2 f4 32.♜g2 ♞h6! 33.♜c3 ♜c8 34.♞b2 ♞f5 35.♜f2 ♞xd6 36.♜ff3 g5 37.♜cd3 ♞f5 38.♜xd7 ♞e3+ 39.♚e1 g4 40.♜f2 g3 41.♜f3 ♜ce8

White resigned.

2. The ‘elastic’ treatment of the opening (the transition from one opening to another)

This stratagem, introduced back in the day by the author, was regarded by the wiseacres of the Tarrasch period as the product of decadence. For example, Therkatz, an amateur of sufficiently feeble ability as to have been entrusted with a rather important chess column, asserted that to mask one’s intentions in the opening showed a ‘lack of courage’!

In point of fact, this stratagem is simply a matter of transferring the principles of maneuver to the domain of the opening. Although employed on more than one occasion, in 1907, 1910, and 1911 (cf.

Games 4, 53, and 19 in this book), this stratagem may still be said to comprise enough virgin territory.

Little known, for example, are the following methods tried by the author.

I. **Grünfeld-Nimzowitsch**, Breslau 1925: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3,** and now **4…♗a6!**. The idea behind this was as follows: 3…b6 ‘threatened’ centralization by …♗b7; to weaken the effect of this threat White played 4.g3 (intending to play ♗g2), but at the same time left his c4-pawn only weakly protected. This signaled the second player to instigate an attack against this pawn. There followed **5.♕a4 c6 6.♗g2 b5 7.cxb5 cxb5 8.♕d1 ♗b7**, when Black got an at least equal game due to the successful elimination of the c4-pawn (**9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♘b3**, and now **11…♗c6**, preventing a2-a4, should have been played).

II. **Grünfeld-Nimzowitsch**, Semmering 1926: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 ♗a6! 7.♘bd2 c6 8.b3 d5 9.♗b2 ♘bd7 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.♕c2 c5**, with a fully completed development.

If we examine the above examples for the sake of discerning their strategic content, we see that the essential components of alternating play, namely, the ‘two weaknesses’ and the ‘axis’, were very much present. The centralizing threat …♗b7 corresponded with one weakness and the potential play against the c4-pawn with the other. Serving as the ‘maneuvering axis’ was the light-square complex of c4/d5 and a6/b7.

To illustrate the stratagem of interest to us here we offer Games 80 through 83, all of which show a blending of the ‘Indian’ and the ‘Dutch’ openings. We note that this blending is not limited to the opening phase only, but also encompasses various middlegame motifs.

The Indian-Dutch alliance (stem game, Bernstein-Nimzowitsch, St. Petersburg 1914) was in its day the first of its kind and provided as it were a window into the new method of play.

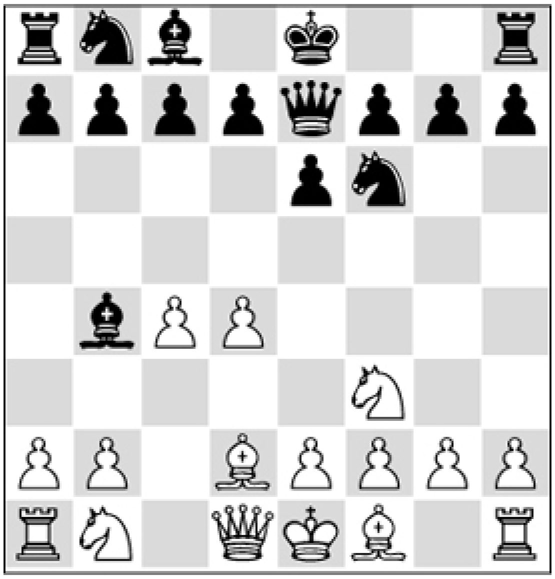
Game 80

Milan Vidmar

Aron Nimzowitsch

New York 1927 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 ♗b4+ 4.♗d2 ♕e7



This innovation, originating with the author, does not in any way signify a premature commitment to a particular opening set-up. On e7 the queen is quite well placed in any event – whether for an Indian or Dutch opening.

5.♘c3

5.g3 would probably be a bit better.

5…0-0 6.e3 d6

Black is still at the crossroads between the Dutch (…b7-b6 and …♗b7) and the Indian (…c7-c5 or …e6-e5, both followed by …♘c6). The decision is made next move.

7.♗e2

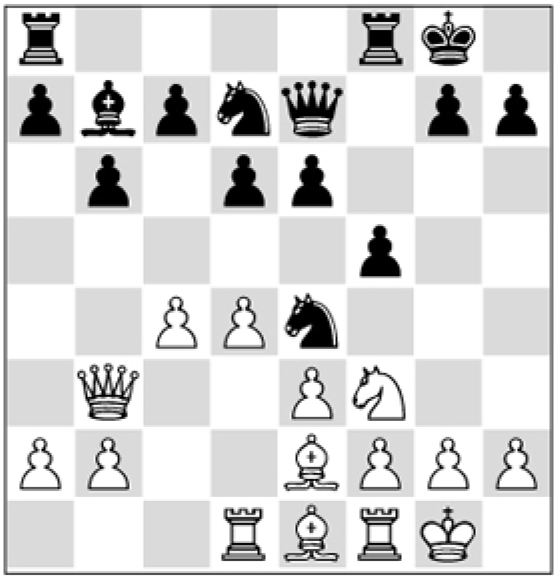
White renounces 7.♗d3, and this has to be accounted as a success for Black’s alternating strategy.

7…b6 8.0-0 ♗b7 9.♕c2 ♘bd7 10.♖ad1 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘e4

With a complete ‘Hollandizing’ of the opening.

12.♗e1 f5 13.♕b3

The idea behind this somewhat mysterious move lies in the protection of the e3-pawn; e.g., after the sequence ♘d2 ♘xd2; ♖xd2 ♕g5; f3 the pawn at e3 is guarded.



13…c5

Now the Dutch set-up is complete: the e4-square and the pawn at c5, the latter used for both attack and defense (directed against c4-c5).

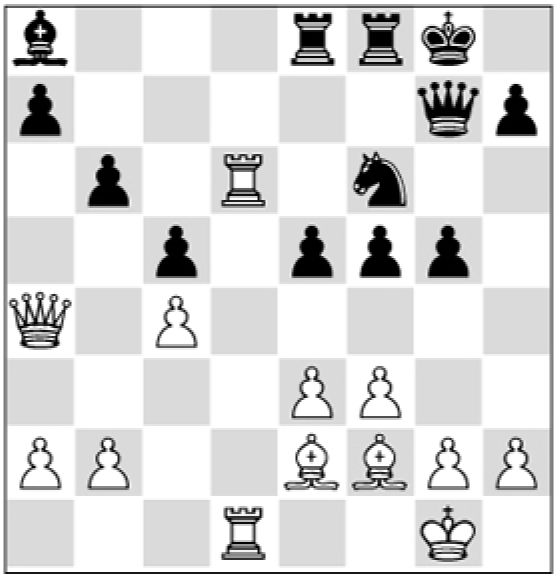
14.♘d2 ♘xd2 15.♖xd2 e5 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.f3 g5

Black now has to conduct his flank attack in such a way that his opponent cannot in the meantime break into his position along the d-file.

18.♗f2 ♘f6 19.♖fd1 ♖ae8 20.♕a4 ♗a8 21.♖d6

The exchange sacrifice 21.♖d7 ♘xd7 22.♖xd7 would not suffice because of 22…♕f6 23.♕xa7 and now, simply, 23…h6.

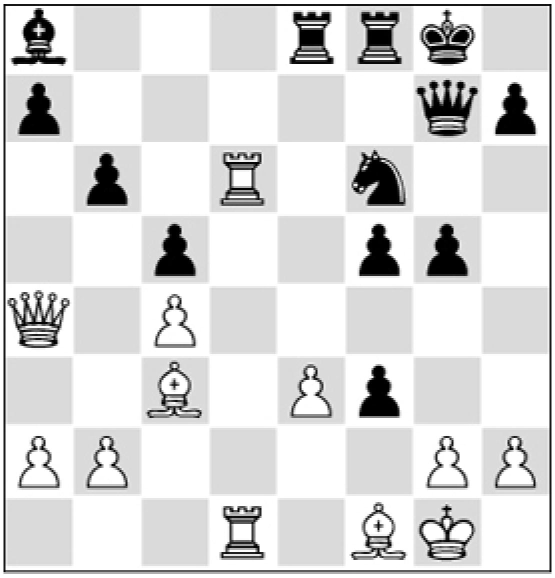
21…♕g7



22.♗f1

A better defense is afforded by 22.♗e1. If 22…e4, then 23.♗c3; if, however, 22…g4, then 23.fxg4 ♘xg4 24.♖d7 ♕g5 25.♗xg4 ♕xg4 26.♕c2.

22…e4! 23.♗e1 exf3 24.♗c3



Now this diversion comes too late, as the pretty reply demonstrates.

24…♛e7!

Now, on 25.♗xf6, mate would follow: 25…♕xe3+ 26.♔h1 fxg2+ and 27…♕e1+.

25.♜6d3 fxg2 26.♝xg2 ♝xg2 27.♝xf6

On 27.♔xg2 there follows 27…♕e4+, with an attack that will soon be decisive.

27…♛e4 28.♜1d2 ♝h3 29.♝c3 ♛g4+

and mate in two moves.

Game 81

Dawid Przepiorka

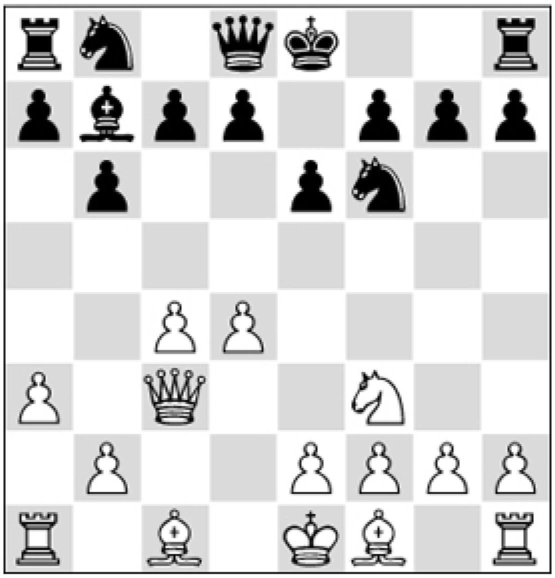
Aron Nimzowitsch

Kecskemet 1927 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.♘c3 ♝b7 5.♛c2 ♝b4 6.a3

This move looks very much like a loss of tempo. Why not 6.g3 instead?

6…♝xc3+ 7.♛xc3



7…d6!

Better than the immediate 7…♘e4; e.g., 8.♕c2 d6 9.g3 ♘d7 10.♗g2, when in view of the threatened 11.♘g5 Black would be forced to play the quite unappealing defensive move 10…♖b8. The transition (to the ‘second’ opening set-up) must not occur too suddenly!

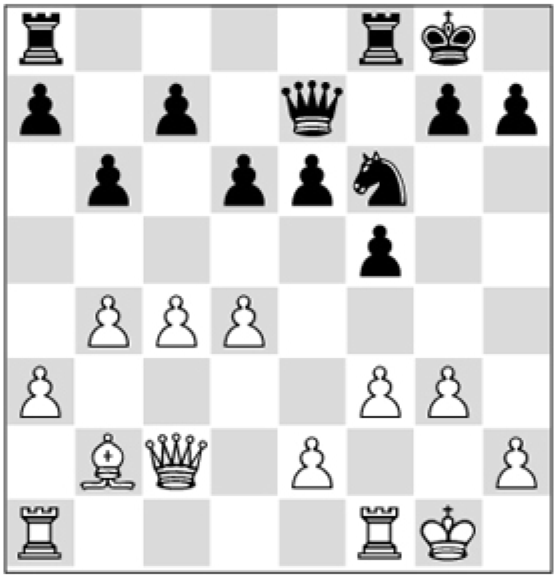
8.g3 ♘bd7 9.♝g2 ♛e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.b4 ♘e4

Only now is this appropriate!

12.♛c2 f5 13.♘g5 ♘df6 14.♘xe4

Preferable is 14.f3 ♘xg5 15.♗xg5 e5! 16.e3, with drawing chances.

14…♗xe4 15.♗xe4 ♘xe4 16.f3 ♘f6 17.♗b2



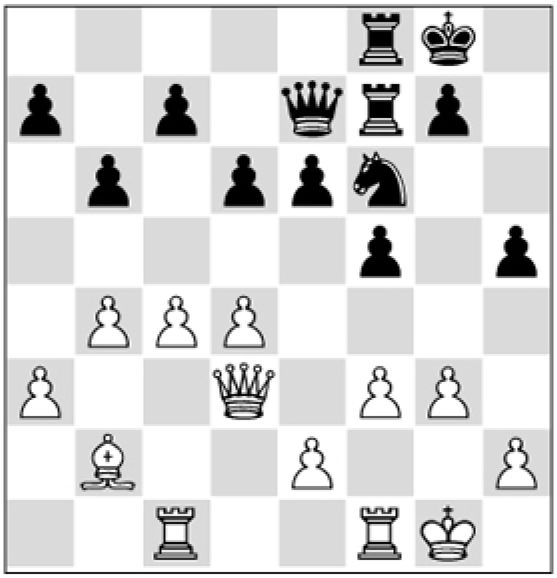
17…♖f7!

Not however 17…a5; e.g., 18.♗c3 and Black would only have committed himself needlessly.

18.♖ac1

Correct was 18.♖f2.

18…♖af8 19.♕d3 h5



20.e4?

If this move were really playable, Black’s preventive set-up with …♖f7 and …♖f8 would have been pointless. But the text is not in fact playable, inasmuch as the f-file, which White opens so cheerfully, will utterly devour him. 20.e3 looks somewhat better, although here too White would stand worse; e.g., 20…h4 21.♔g2 ♘h5.

20…fxe4 21.fxe4 ♘g4

The execution so graciously predicted in the previous note now begins.

22.h3 ♘f2 23.♕e2 ♘xh3+ 24.♔h1 ♕g5 25.♖xf7 ♖xf7 26.♕g2 ♘f2+ 27.♔g1 ♕e3

0-1

To understand this game as a whole one must grasp the connection between Black’s waiting and attacking strategies: all of Black’s waiting moves (moves 7, 17, and 18) were played, in a sense, only so that the powerful 19…h5 should have a staggering effect. Seen in this light, the enormous power of the 19th move becomes comprehensible. A victory of the alternating strategy brought over to the opening phase.

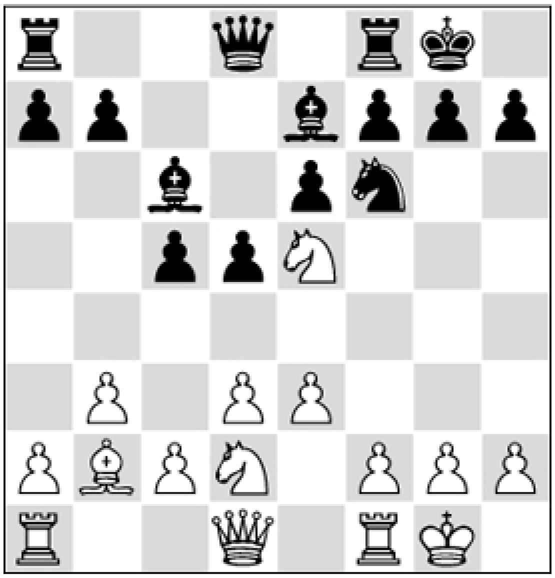
Game 82

Aron Nimzowitsch

Rudolf Spielmann

New York 1927 (4)

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.♗b2 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 ♗e7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.♘e5



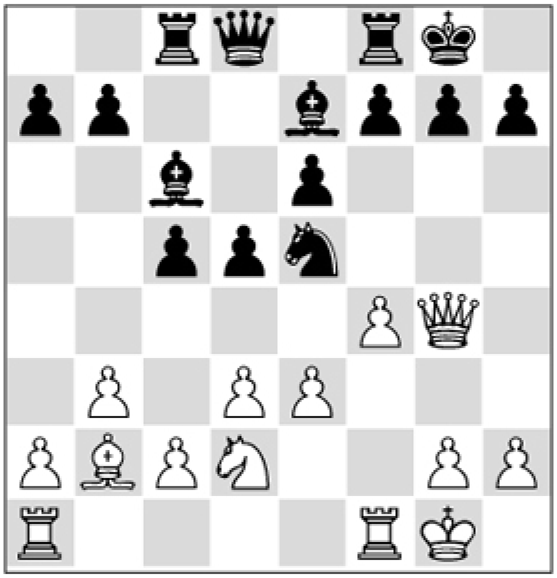
We have arrived at the ‘Dutch’ formation.

10…♜c8

H. Wolf played 10…♘d7 here at Karlsbad 1923; there followed 11.♘df3 ♖c8 12.♕e2 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗e8 14.♕g4 f5 15.♕e2 ♗f6 16.c4 ♕e7 17.f4. White initiated a strong attack with h2-h3, ♔h2, ♖f2, ♖g1, and g2-g4, and won.

11.f4 ♞d7 12.♛g4 ♞xe5

On 12…f5 there would follow 13.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 14.♘xc6+ ♗f6 15.♘xd8 ♗xb2 16.♘xe6+ and wins.



13.♝xe5

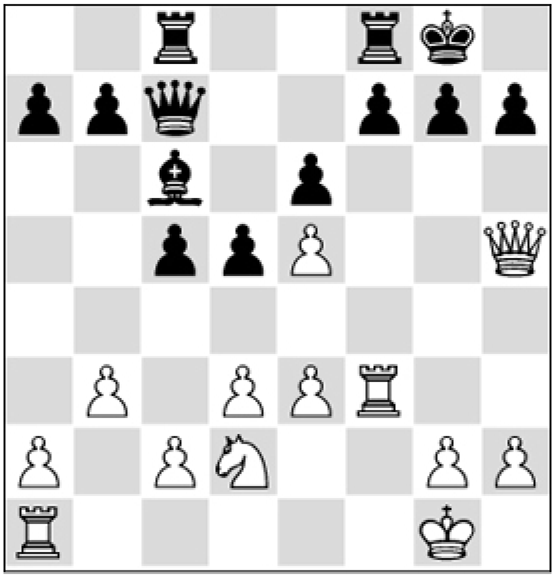
13.fxe5 could also be considered; e.g., 13…♗d7 14.♖f3 f5 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♗xf6 ♖xf6 17.♖xf6 ♕xf6 18.♖f1 ♕e5 19.♕f4 ♕xf4 20.exf4, with some superiority in the center (♘f3-e5). Or 13…♕a5! 14.♖f2, when White would have the choice between the leveling e3-e4 followed by exd5 (when the bishop would have to recapture) or the maneuver 15.♘f1 followed by ♘g3-h5.

Compare the notes to Black’s eleventh move in Game 83.

13…♝f6 14.♜f3 ♝xe5 15.fxe5 ♛c7

Now, 15…♕a5 would be useless because of 16.♖g3 and ♘f3.

16.♛h5



16…h6

The liberating move …f7-f5 is not yet possible (e.g., 16…f5? 17.exf6 ♖xf6 18.♖xf6 gxf6 19.♕g4+), but Black should have prepared it with 16…♗e8; e.g., 17.♖h3 h6 18.♘f3 f5, when White’s attack would not have been easy to carry out.

17.♜af1 g6

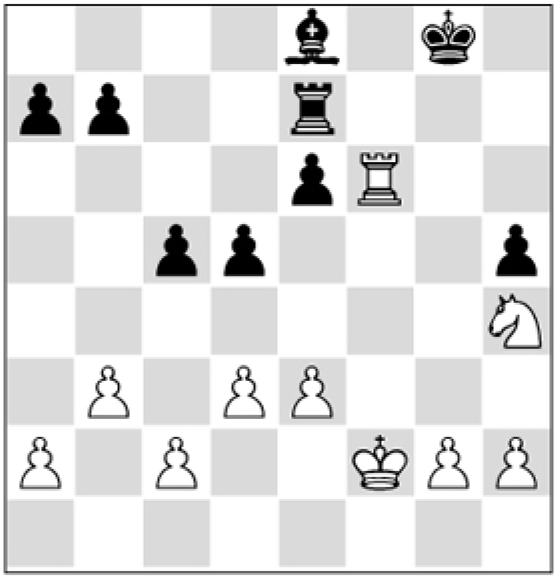
White could have had a clear central superiority after the immediate 17…♗e8 (instead of 17…g6); e.g., 18.♖g3 f5 19.♕xh6 ♕xe5 (threatening 20…♕xg3) 20.♕f4 ♕f6 21.♘f3. Less clear after 17…♗e8, on the other hand, would be the sacrificial continuation 18.♖f6; e.g., 18…♕a5! (always this same sortie by the queen!) 19.♖xh6, gxh6, etc.

18.♛xh6 ♛xe5 19.♜f6 ♛h5

White threatened to become unpleasant with g2-g4 and ♖f3-h3. The text move costs a pawn; Black soldiers on for many moves, but to no avail.

20.♛xh5 gxh5 21.♞f3 ♜c7 22.♜h6 f6 23.♞h4 ♝e8 24.♜hxf6 ♜xf6 25.♜xf6 ♜e7 26.♚f2

White is forced to maneuver on the dark squares, as demanded by the Logos of the game; and the fact that White has consumed the f-pawn rather than the h-pawn seems to indicate that the first player has by no means misjudged the strategic situation.



But a few moves later he plays a weak move, unnecessarily allowing his opponent a longer resistance.

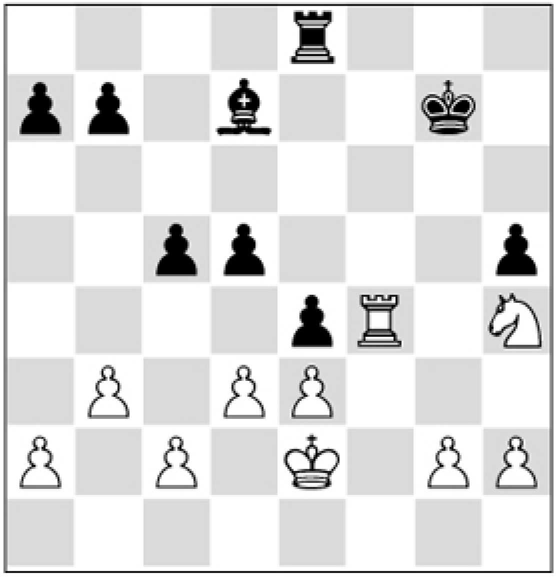
26…♚g7 27.♖f4 ♝d7 28.♚e2

This is the weak move. 28.♔e1 should have been played. The inherent strength of the dark squares manifests itself most impressively. (In terms of ‘dark-square play’ we might rather have considered only the point e5 or g5.)

28…e5 29.♖f5 ♖e8

Because of the position of his own king, 30.♖xh5 is now out of the question.

30.♖f2 e4 31.♖f4



Slowly but surely White re-establishes a foundation on the dark squares.

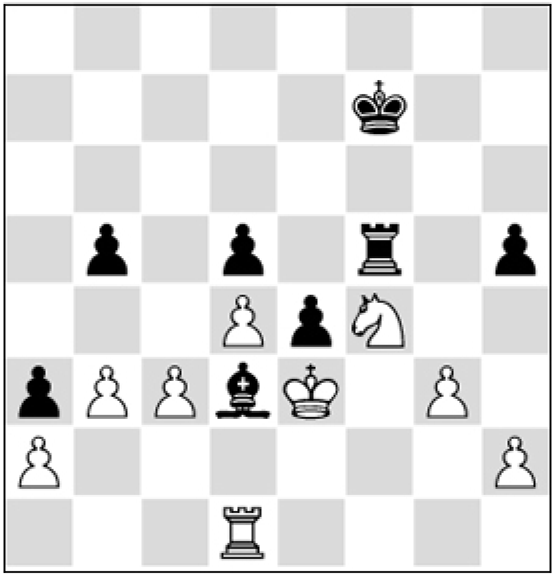
31…♖e5 32.♔d2 b5 33.g3 ♗h3!

Making the knight a temporary prisoner.

34.d4 cxd4 35.exd4 ♖g5 36.c3 a5 37.♖f2 a4 38.♔e3 a3 39.♖c2 ♗f1 40.♖c1 ♗d3 41.♘g2

The roles are reversed – now it is the bishop that is the prisoner and the knight that is dancing around, wielding the cudgel.

41…♖f5 42.♘f4 ♔f7 43.♖d1



Now threatening 44.♘xd3, which before was unfeasible because of 43…♖f3+.

43…♚e7 44.♘xd3 exd3 45.b4

Creating an open square for the king at b3. The d3-pawn will not of course run away.

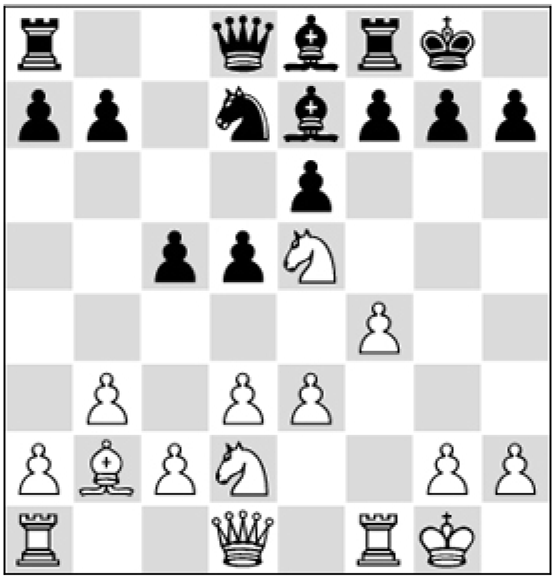
45…♚d6 46.♚xd3 ♖f2 47.♖d2 ♖f3+ 48.♚c2 ♚e6 49.♖e2+ ♚d6 50.♚b3 ♖d3 51.♖e5 h4 52.gxh4 ♖h3 53.♖h5 ♚c6 54.♖h6+ ♚b7 55.h5

and Spielmann gave up.

Game 83

Aron Nimzowitsch
Akiba Rubinstein
Semmering 1926 (7)

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.♗b2 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 ♗e7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.♘e5 ♗e8 11.f4 ♘d7



It will repay the effort to pause here and look at the possible continuation 12.♕g4 ♘xe5 13.fxe5 ♕a5! (more aggressive than 13…♗d7 and …f7-f5): 14.♖f2 (planning the knight maneuver ♘d2-f1-g3, etc.) 14…♕b4 (again tying White’s hands!) 15.e4 ♗c6 (best: only centralization can help Black’s game) 16.a3 ♕a5 17.exd5 ♗xd5 (17…exd5 looks poor because of 18.e6 f6 19.♘f3, threatening ♘h4 and ♘f5) 18.♘f1 (the preventive move 18.a4, anticipating …b7-b5, would on the contrary permit 18…♕b4) 18…♕c7! (not 18…b5 because of 19.a4, paralysing Black’s queenside) 19.♘e3 b5 (the typical counter-chance: …c5-c4 is to be enabled at any price, even if it involves the sacrifice of a pawn!) 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.e6 f6 22.♖af1 and White’s attack is quicker; e.g., 22…♔h8 23.♖f3 and ♖h3.

From this analysis it appears that 12.♕g4 would have given White favorable chances.

12.♞xd7 ♛xd7 13.e4 f6 14.♛f3

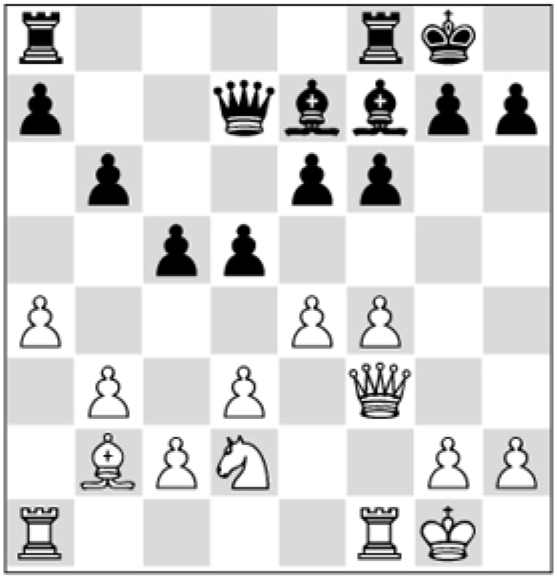
The formation before us is now rather more an Indian set-up.

14…♝f7 15.a4

There is no long-term preventive measure against …c5-c4.

15…b6

Not at once 15…a6? because of 16.a5, with paralysing effect.



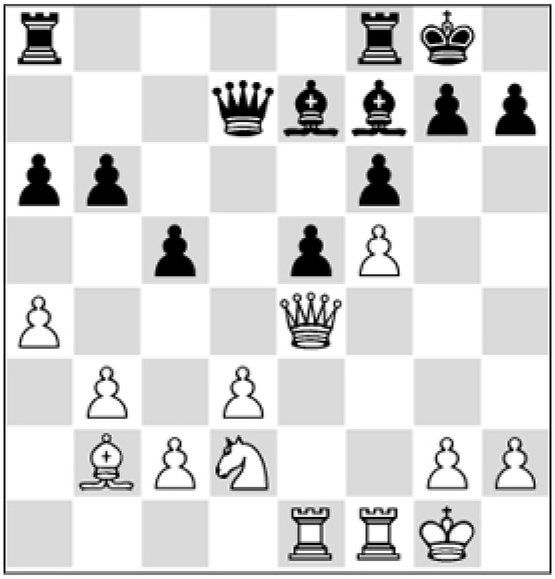
16.♜ae1

Instead, the serried advance g2-g4, h2-h4, and g4-g5 would have been possible. Does 16.♖a2 and 17.♖fa1 (preventive play against the threatened …a7-a6 and …b6-b5) come into consideration? How could Black have made any progress in that event?

16…a6 17.f5 dxe4

Bad is 17…exf5 because of 18.exd5 ♗xd5? 19.♖xe7!.

18.♛xe4 e5



19.♖e3

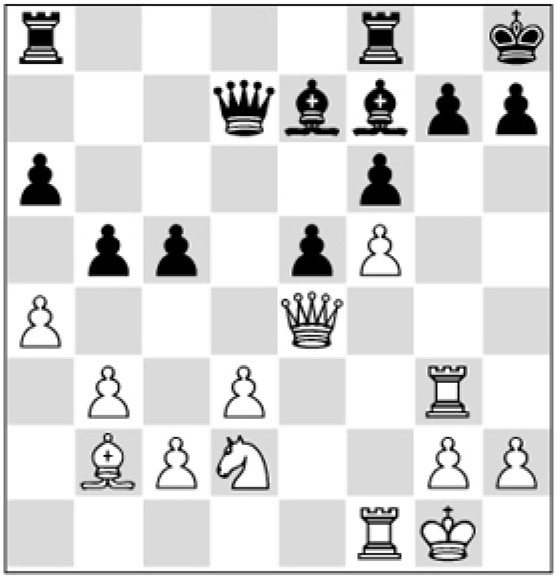
Taking aim at the enemy kingside, which looks cramped; but the attack is not easy to carry out, especially in view of his own somewhat displaced queen (the e4 square would be much more suitable for the knight).

Instead of 19.♖e3 we therefore would suggest the following regrouping: 19.♕h4 b5 20.♘e4 c4 21.bxc4 bxc4 22.♖e3, threatening to follow up with 23.♖h3 h6 24.♖g3, etc. This rearrangement would combine attack with a makeshift defense of his own queenside.

19…b5 20.♖g3

Now White threatens to win a piece with 21.♕g4 g6 22.fxg6 ♕xg4 23.gxf7+ and 24.♖xg4.

20…♚h8



21.♘f3

21.♕g4 g6 22.♘e4 would still have been appropriate here.

21…bxa4

A mistake. He had to play 21…♗d6.

22.♘xe5! ♕e8!

If 22…fxe5, 23.♕xe5 ♗f6 24.♕xf6! gxf6 25.♗xf6#.

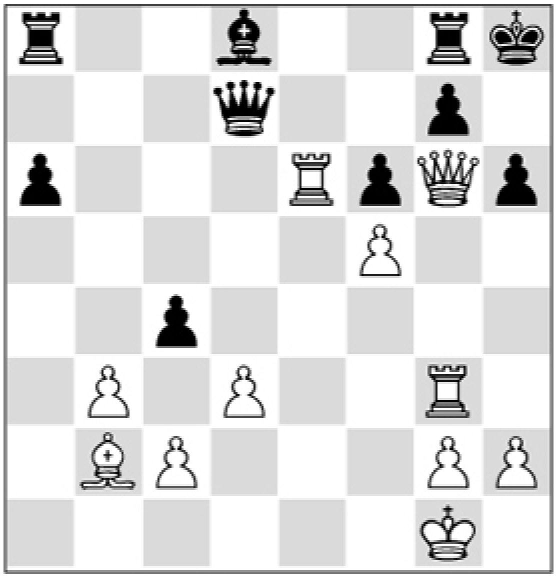
23.♕g4 ♖g8 24.♘xf7+ ♕xf7 25.♕xa4

Now White has an extra pawn and the pleasant choice between gain of material and an ending that is exceedingly favorable (the a6- and c5-pawns are bad endgame weaknesses). In brief, his game is as good as won.

25…♕d5 26.♕g4 ♗d8 27.♕g6! h6 28.♖e1 ♕d7 29.♖e6

Simpler was 29.♖e4, with complete command of the board. But the text move, planning 30.♖xf6, should win still more quickly.

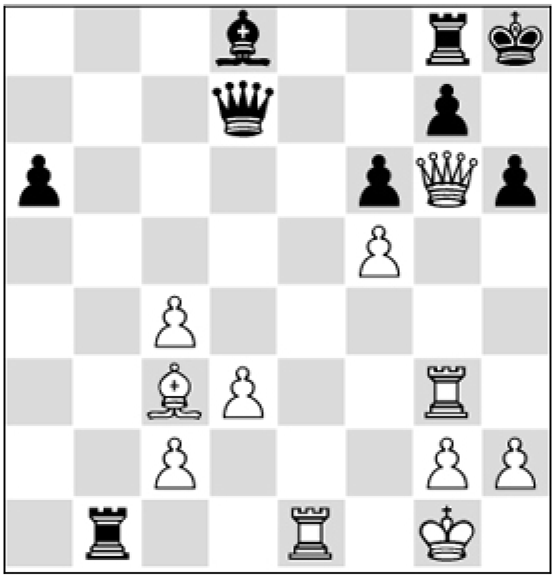
29…c4!



30.bxc4?

It was partly out of his anger at having permitted the breakthrough …c5-c4 (when prophylaxis with 29.♖e4 was the obvious continuation) and partly through his firm belief, based on the ‘history of the game’, in the efficacy of the move …c5-c4, that White did not find the courage to carry out the winning move he had planned. But he was also short of time. The game could have been won by 30.♖xf6! ♗xf6 31.♗xf6 gxf6 32.♕xh6+ ♕h7 33.♕xf6+ ♖g7 34.♖g6 cxb3 35.cxb3 ♔g8 36.♖h6 ♖f7 37.♕g5+ ♖g7 38.♕f4 and wins.

30…♜b8 31.♝c3 ♜b1+ 32.♜e1



32…♝b6+

It is very strange that this plausible check should let go of the draw, which was there to be had with the immediate 32…♖xe1+ 33.♗xe1 ♕a4!.

33.♚f1 ♜xe1+ 34.♝xe1!

The agile bishop heads for, *inter alia*, f2 or b4.

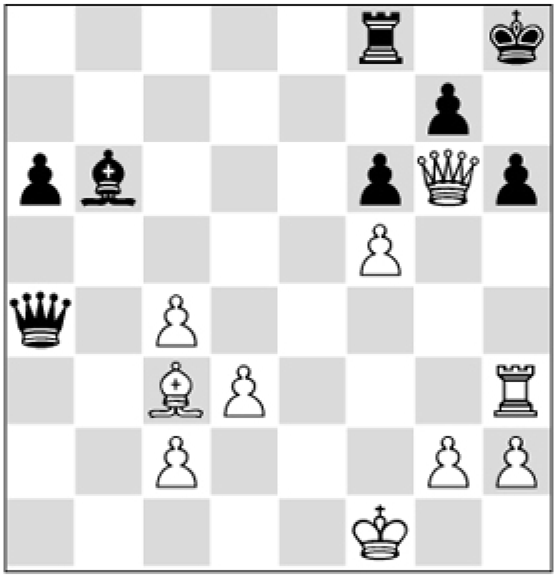
34…♛a4

If 34…♖e8, then 35.♗b4, when 35… ♕e7 is prevented.

35.♜h3! ♜f8

On any other move by the rook the sacrifice on h6 decides; e.g., 35…♖e8 36.♖xh6+ gxh6 37.♕xh6+ ♔g8 38.♕g6+ ♔h8 39.♕xf6+ and 40.♕xb6.

36.♝c3



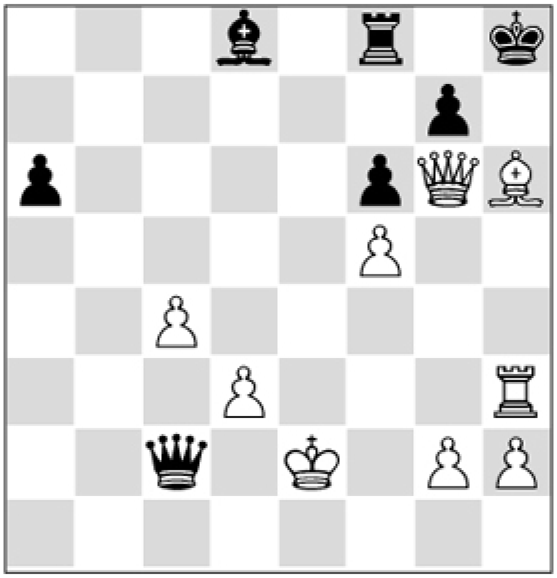
36…♝d8

The final error. Black had a slim chance of a draw with 36…♕xc2 37.♖xh6+ gxh6 38.♕xh6+ ♔g8 39.♕g6+ ♔h8 40.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 41.♕xf6+ ♔g8 42.♕xb6, for now there follows 42…♕xd3+, when the queen ending is not without certain difficulties for White.

37.♝d2 ♛xc2

There now arises a final phase in which one expects a banal discovered check; instead we are most agreeably surprised.

38.♗xh6 ♕b1+ 39.♔e2 ♕c2+



40.♔e3!!

The point. 40.♗d2+ would be worse in view of 40…♔g8 41.♖h7 ♖f7, with the threat 42…♖e7+.

40…♗b6+

Or 40…♕c1+ 41.♔e4! ♕e1+ 42.♖e3! ♕h4+ 43.♔d5! gxh6 44.♖h3 and wins.

41.♔e4! ♕e2+ 42.♖e3!!

Black resigned.

3. The Center and Play on the Flank

Which is better – in the American sense of the word, therefore: of great practical importance for attaining success –: attack in the center or diversion on the flank? The question is a very difficult one. It is of course obvious that flank attacks may be undertaken only after one’s own center is sufficiently strong. But the question is, what do we mean by a *sufficiently* strong center?

The notion that in positions characterized by white pawns at c4, d4, and e3, and black pawns on c6, d5, and e6, White’s advance c4-c5 is refuted by the counter-stroke …e6-e5 – this Tarraschian point of view was shown already in 1913 to be of scant validity (cf. *My System*). The move …e6-e5 (or …f7-f5 in the position with white pawns at e4, d5, and f2 and black pawns on d6, e5, and f7, etc.) must be taken rather as a normal reaction – we cannot speak seriously of a ‘refutation’. The respective prospects of the pawn chains (for the closing of the position brought about by c4-c5 and d4-d5 respectively leads automatically to the formation of pawn chains) must be appraised at approximately equal value. This, my contention, has long been accepted. I myself had become converted to this view as far back as 1907. Let us take a look at the opening of my game vs. **Chigorin** (Black) at Karlsbad 1907: **1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 ♝g4 3.♞e5 ♝f5 4.c4 e6 5.♞c3** (5.♕b3 ♘c6!) **5…c6 6.♛b3 ♛b6 7.♝f4! ♞f6 8.c5 ♛xb3 9.axb3 ♞bd7 10.b4 ♞h5 11.♞xd7 ♚xd7 12.♝d2** White gives no thought to preventing …e6-e5. **12…♝e7 13.b5 ♞f6 14.e3 e5** So what! **15.♝e2 ♞e8** Now Black even loses a pawn. The attack introduced with 14…e5 if need be could have proceeded with 15…e4 or 15…exd4 (instead of 15…♘e8), but of course this would not in any way have enabled Black to shake his opponent’s central formation. After 15…♘e8?, **16.bxc6+ bxc6 17.dxe5!** was played, when 17…♗xc5 was impermissible because of 18.♘a4, winning the exchange (19.♘b6+).

The modern view quite clearly is to recognize any sound central position – that is, one that is solid and firm – as capable of defense, even if it be ever so constrained. In Game 85 I show in striking fashion, in accordance with my own principle, that *a strong central position allows for diversions on the flank, even when their objectives as yet remain obscure* – by undertaking a most peculiar-looking (the critics would say, bizarre) attack on the flank.

The reader will find a further ground-breaking postulate in Game 88:

A glance over at the flank, while having one’s mind on the center, is the deepest sense of position play.

For the rest, we refer to the following games, which the modern reader should play over with special care.

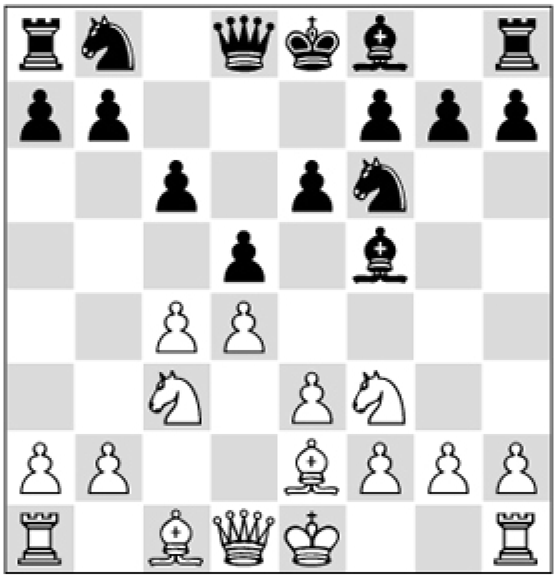
Game 84

Aron Nimzowitsch

Allan Nilsson

Copenhagen 1924 (8)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.e3 d5 4.♗e2 ♗f5 5.♘c3 e6 6.d4



In a roundabout way we have arrived at a very well-known set-up.

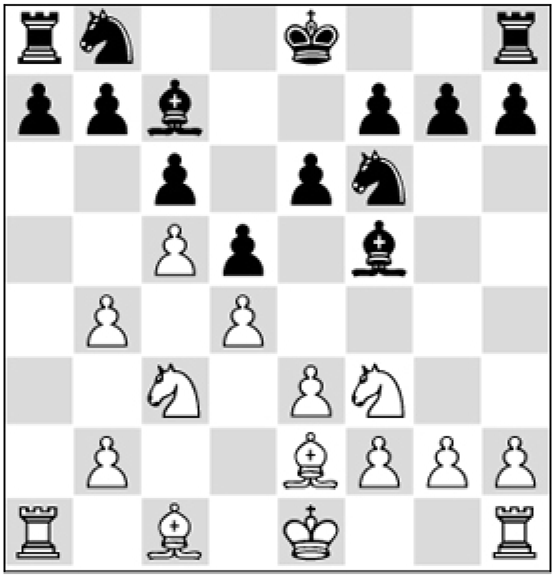
6…♗d6

Better is 6…♘bd7 first.

7.♕b3 ♕b6

7…♕c8 deserved preference.

8.c5 ♕xb3 9.axb3 ♗c7 10.b4

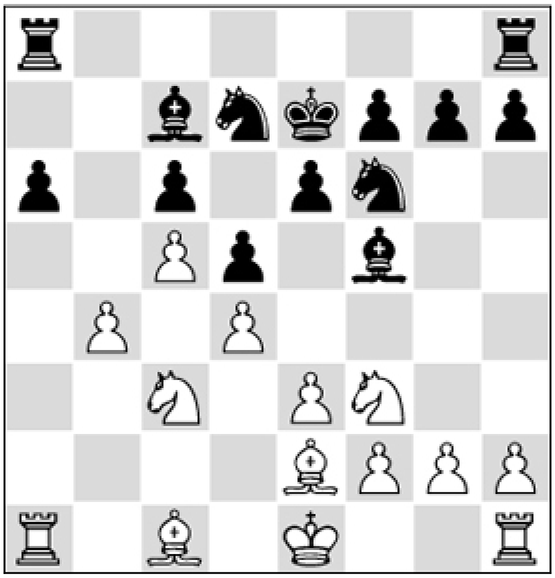


White ignores the coming counter-attack (…e6-e5) in good ‘central conscience’, for even if Black ‘achieves’ …e6-e5 he still will have achieved nothing. The further advance …e5-e4 (…e5xd4 is of course harmless) would only lead to a mummification that could be remedied with the f-pawn (…f7-f5-f4), but only at the cost of far too much time. Thus …e6-e5 is shown to pose no danger to White, who can go ahead and prosecute his flank attack without second thoughts.

10…♘bd7 11.b5 ♔e7 12.b4 a5!

An ingenious attempt to open up the game. After any other move White’s game would obviously be superior.

13.bxa6 bxa6



14.♘h4!

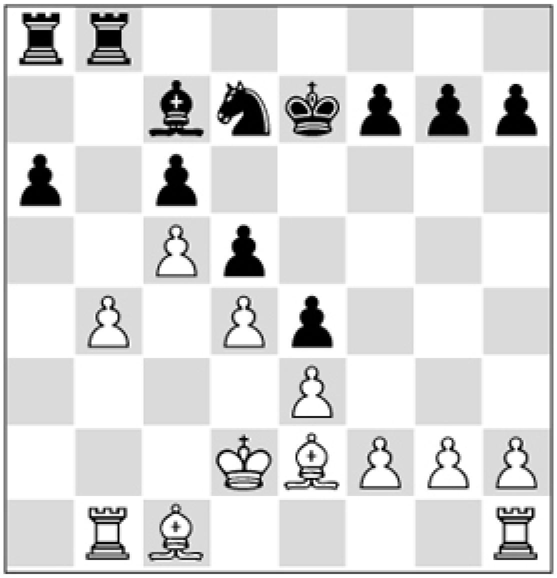
Taking the a-pawn is hardly to be recommended; e.g., 14.♖xa6 ♖xa6 15.♗xa6 ♖b8 16.b5 ♘e4 17.♗d2 ♘xc3 18.♗xc3 ♗d3. On the other hand, covering the b-pawn with 14.♖a4 seems manifestly inferior, as in some variations White must be in a position to answer …a6-a5 with b4-b5. It is therefore necessary to abandon the a-file voluntarily in order to secure the base-square b1.

14…♖hb8 15.♘xf5+ exf5 16.♖b1 ♘e4 17.♘xe4 fxe4

It now looks as though …e6-e5-e4 had in fact been played.

18.♔d2!

Heading to c2, to give firm protection to the rook at b1.



18…♖b7

If 18…a5, then 19.b5 cxb5! 20.♖xb5 ♖xb5 21.♗xb5 ♖b8 22.♗a4 ♖b4 23.♗c2, threatening ♗a3, when White is for choice.

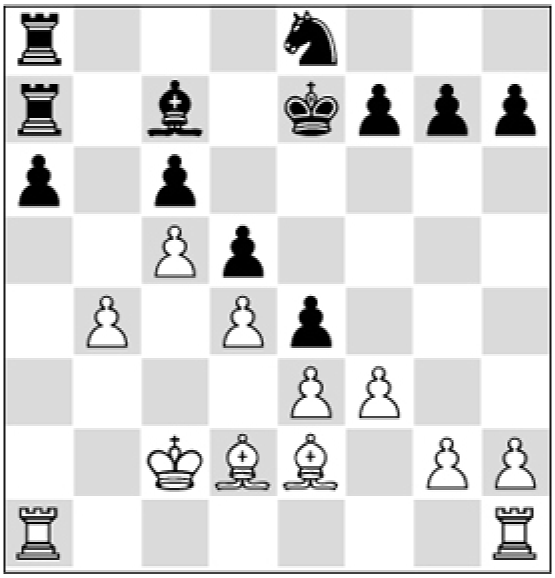
19.♔c2 ♘f6

To bring the knight to b5 by way of e8 and c7. The initiative with 19…♖ab8 20.♗d2 a5? would not of course bear fruit because of 21.bxa5. This shows what a good idea it was to give thorough protection to the b1-rook.

20.♗d2 ♘e8 21.♖a1

First consolidation, then the attack!

21…♖ba7 22.f3

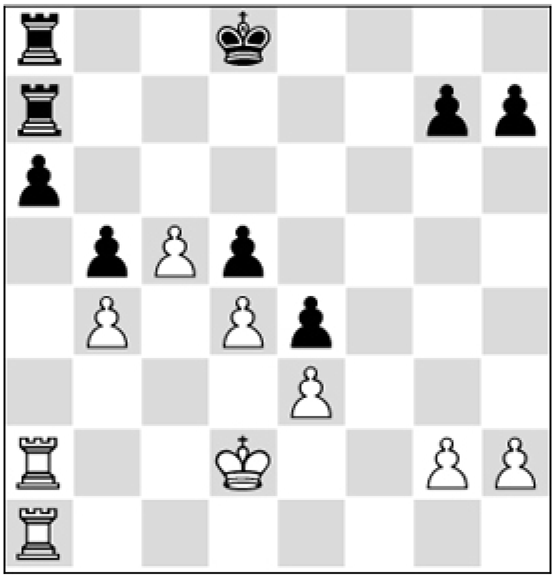


Opening not only the f-file for the rooks but also the diagonal e1-h4 for the bishop at d2.

22…f5 23.fxe4 fxe4 24.♖a2 ♗d8 25.♖ha1 ♘c7 26.♗e1!

Black's beautiful defensive play founders on this move.

26…♘b5 27.♗h4+! ♔e8 28.♗xd8 ♔xd8 29.♗xb5 cxb5 30.♔d2!

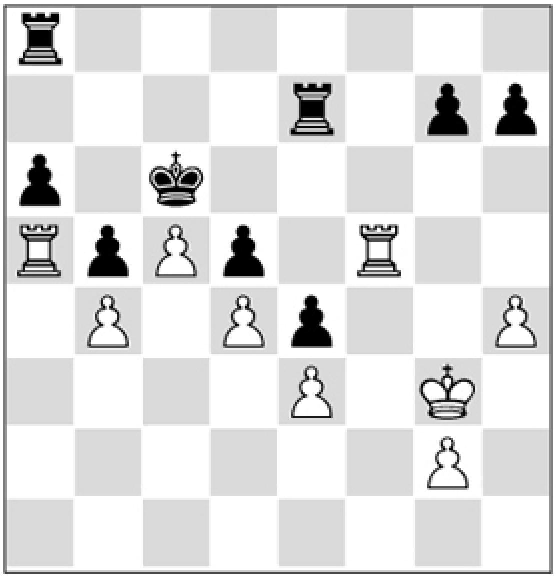


The point of the exchanges. The king hurries to the right flank to give as much support as it can to the rook that will penetrate down the f-file. Later, White's h-pawn, too, will take part in this supportive action (see the note to White's 37th move), while Black's pieces, in stark contrast, will prove unable to organize themselves into any proper concerted action.

30…♚e7 31.♚e2 ♚e6 32.♚f2 ♚d7 33.♜a5!

A blockading move with a potential threat (♖xb5).

33…♚c6 34.♚g3 ♚b7 35.♜f1 ♚c6 36.♜f5! ♜e7 37.h4

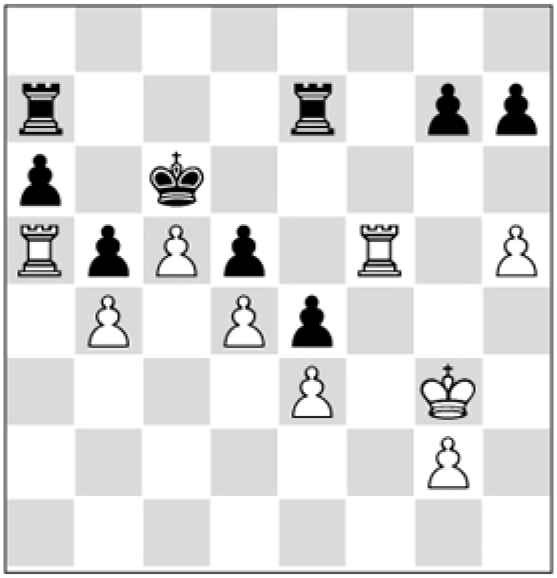


Threatening h4-h5-h6 and a subsequent ♖f6+.

37…♜aa7

Giving away the 8th rank, but if 37… ♖d7, White could already play 38.♖e5.

38.h5



38…♜e6

On 38…h6, both 39.♔h4 followed by g2-g4-g5 and 39.♖f8 ♔b7 40.♖d8 would win. Black simply has too many weaknesses.

39.♜f8

The rest is a matter of technique.

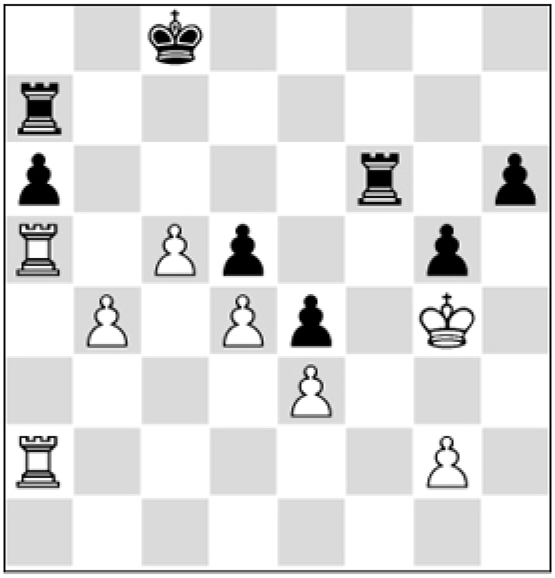
39…g6 40.h6 g5 41.♜b8 ♚c7 42.♜bxb5 ♜xh6 43.♜a4 ♜f6

Or 43…♖b7 44.♖ba5.

44.♜ba5 ♚c8 45.♚g4

To lure the h-pawn forward to h6.

45…h6 46.♜a2



46…♖af7

If 46…♖b7, then 47.♖xa6 ♖xa6 48.♖xa6 ♖xb4 49.♖xh6 (cf. the note to move 45) 49…♖b3 50.♖h3 and wins.

47.♖xa6 ♖xa6 48.♖xa6 ♖f2 49.g3 ♖b2 50.♖xh6 ♖b3

Or 50…♖xb4 51.♔xg5 ♖b3 52.♔f4.

51.♖d6 ♖xe3 52.♖xd5 ♖d3 53.b5 e3 54.♔f3

1-0

Game 85

Frederick Yates

Aron Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1923 (2)

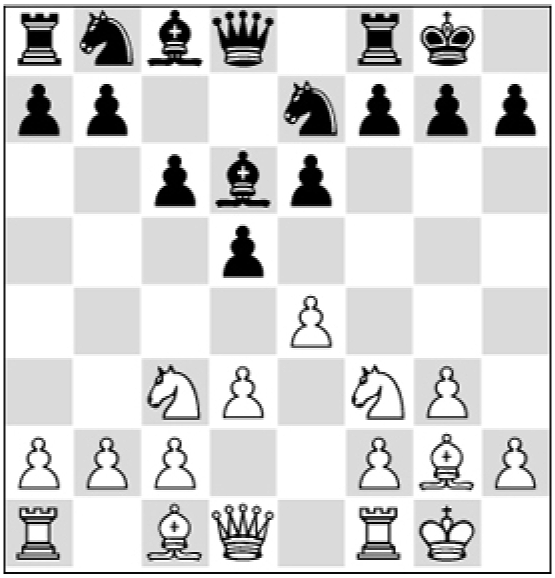
1.♘f3 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 c6

In an attempt to anticipate the move c2-c4.

4.d3

On 4.d4 there could follow 4…♗d6 5.♗f4 ♗xf4 6.gxf4 ♘h6 and …♘f5, with a solid position for Black.

4…♗d6 5.♘c3 ♘e7! 6.0-0 0-0 7.e4



7…b5!

Black appreciates that his position is solid and firm and infers from this that he is justified in undertaking an attack on the flank. His scheme, first, is to take the opportunity to unsettle the knight with …b5-b4.

8.♘e1 f5

He could have afforded himself a move like …a7-a5, as the central operations planned by his opponent are clearly of little relevance.

9.exd5

9.f4 would be a gross blunder because of 9…dxe4 10.dxe4 b4 and 11…♗c5+. (Hence the ‘threat’ …b5-b4 has already had its effect.)

9…exd5

Now Black stands quite well.

10.♘e2

To prevent …f5-f4.

10…♘d7 11.♗f4

The play against the dark squares is soon shown to be misguided. Correct was 11.c4 ♘b6, with about even chances.

11…♘b6!

The continuation of the flank attack begun with 7…b5. The text move also obviates the possibility of c2-c4.

12.♕d2 ♘g6 13.h4 ♘xf4 14.♘xf4 ♕f6

The play against White’s queenside begins at last to assume tangible form: a loosening (c2-c3) is to be forced.

15.c3

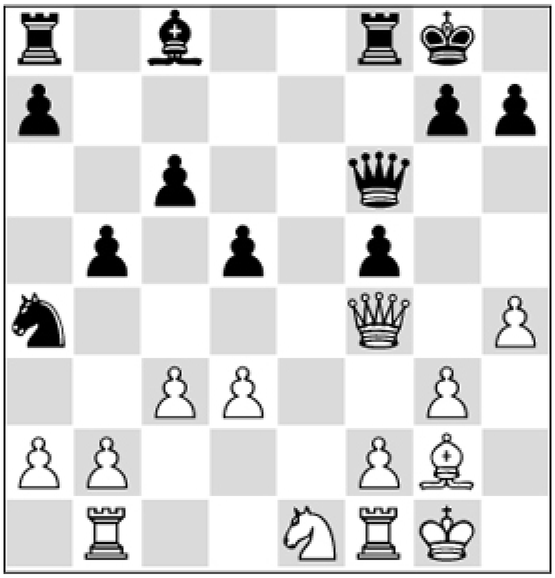
Or 15.♖b1 ♗d7 and …♖ae8, when Black stands well.

15…♗xf4?

Instead of this faulty exchange, which serves only to weaken the e5-square, the continuation 15…♗d7 followed by …♖ae8 should have been chosen. Then later on he could have contemplated …a7-a5 and …b5-b4.

16.♕xf4 ♘a4 17.♖b1

Now the white knight threatens to establish itself on e5 (d3-d4 and ♘e1-f3-e5).



17…♘c5

The mistake committed on move 15 has altered the whole situation to such an extent that the diversionary attack on the wing – which, just a few moves ago (when Black’s pawn structure in the center was solid) had to be taken seriously – *now* appears only as a helpless thrashing about of a *scattered* troop detachment. The text move would have been better replaced with, e.g., 17…♗a6 18.♘f3 ♖ae8 19.♖fe1 (19.d4? b4! 20.♖fc1 ♗d3 and 21…♘xb2) 19…♖xe1+ 20.♘xe1 ♖e8 21.♘f3 ♘c5 22.♖d1 ♗b7. In the resulting position the chances would have been more or less equal, although the weakness of the dark squares e5, d6, c7, and d4 would still weigh in the balance. For example, 23.♕c7 ♕d8 (or 23…♕e7 24.♕a5, with ongoing harassment) 24.♕xd8 ♖xd8 25.♘d4 (25.♘e5? ♘d7!) 25…g6 26.b4 ♘a4 27.♖c1 ♔f7 28.♘b3!, when Black would have difficulties to contend with, as both c3-c4 and ♘a5 are threatened. And yet we are inclined to consider 17…♗a6, etc., the relatively best defense.

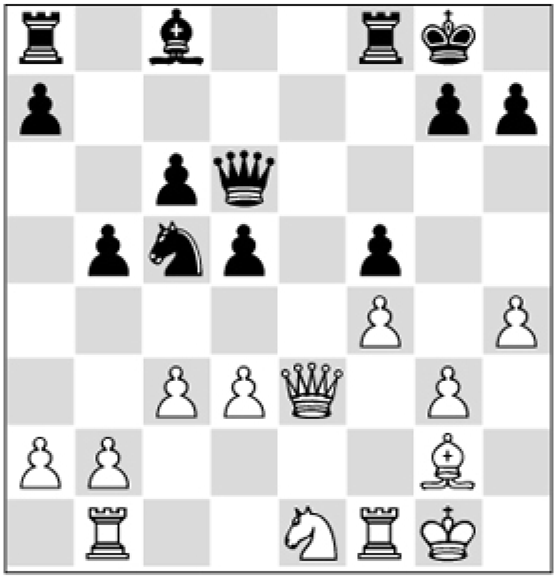
18.♛e3?

He completely misses the importance of the dark-square diagonal f4-c7. 18.♖d1 absolutely had to be played. If 18…♘e6, then first 19.♕d6.

18…♛d6

Very good. The variation 18…♘e6 also would have led to equality, to be sure; e.g., 19.f4 d4 20.cxd4 ♕xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘xd4 22.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 23.♗xf3 ♗b7, although White would perhaps still be a shade better. With the text move, a complete rehabilitation of the threatened ‘dark’ squares could have been achieved.

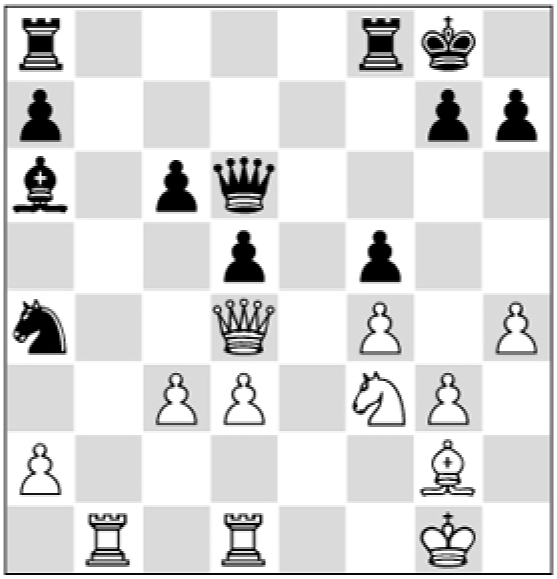
19.f4



19…♝a6!?

Interesting, but not the right move! 19…♘d7 should have been played! For instance, 20.♘f3 ♘f6 21.♘e5 ♘g4! 22.♕e2 ♗d7 23.d4 (else 23…d4) 23…a5! 24.♖be1 ♖fe8 25.♕d3 a4! (securing the queen’s wing against a possible b2-b3 and c3-c4 that White might contemplate), when Black would appear to have fully consolidated his position.

20.♘f3 b4 21.♖fd1 bxc3 22.bxc3 ♘a4 23.♕d4



23…♕a3

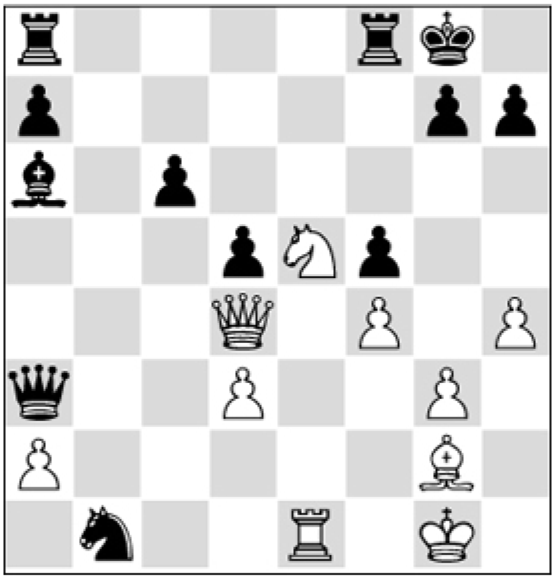
Black’s attack doesn’t look so bad, but it lacks a sound basis: that is, his central formation is much too frail. The moral of the story: After his mistake (15…♗xf4) Black can no longer organize his game for a flank attack; he should instead aspire exclusively for consolidation (with the help of a strategical retreat: see the note to move 18). Thus after the text move White should get the advantage.

24.♘e5

Correct was 24.♖d2!; e.g., 24…♘xc3 25.♖b3 ♕c1+ 26.♔h2 ♘b5 27.♕b4, threatening 28.a4 and 29.♖b1. White would then have had the advantage.

The ingenious text move prepares a coup that should secure for the knight the long-sought Siegfried position (on e5).

24…♘xc3 25.♖e1 ♘xb1



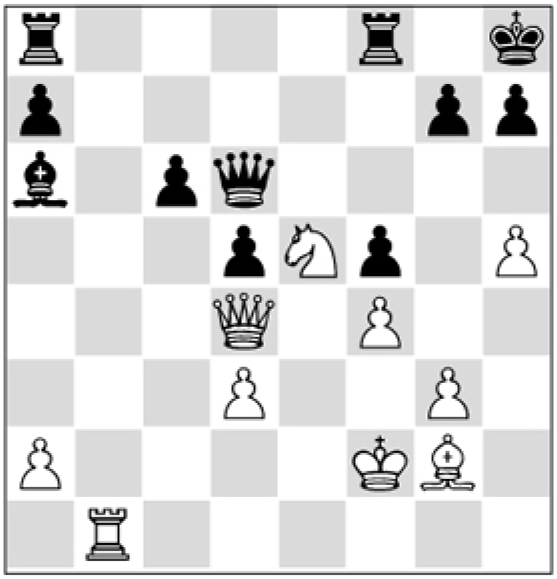
26.♖xb1

The tempting 26.♗xd5+ cxd5 26.♕xd5+ ♔h8 28.♘f7+ ♖xf7 29.♕xa8+ ♖f8 30.♖e8 fails to 30…♕c5+ and 31… ♔g8.

26…♚h8 27.h5 ♕d6 28.♚f2

Here the blockading system with 28.♖c1 and 29.♖c5 might have been far preferable to the attacking attempt initiated by ♔f2.

There follows a clandestine sacrificial combination.



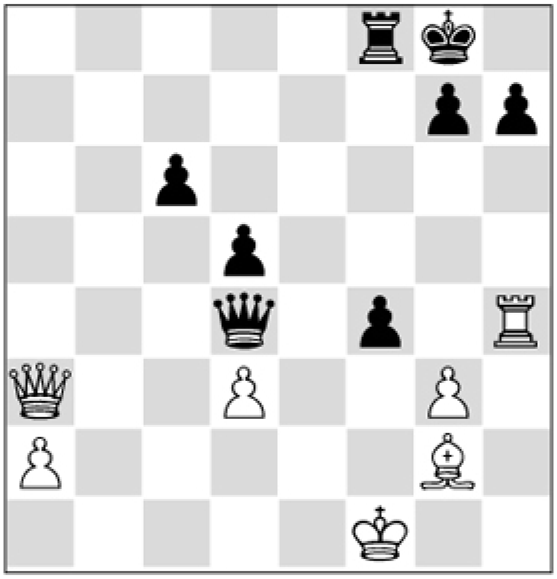
28…♖ae8!! 29.h6 ♕xh6 30.♖h1 ♕f6 31.♕xa7 ♖xe5!! 32.fxe5 ♕xe5 33.♕xa6 ♕d4+!

On the immediate 33…f4 White could have defended himself more easily, namely with 34.gxf4 ♖xf4+ 35.♗f3 or 34…♕xf4+ 35.♔g1.

34.♚f1 f4

If now 35.gxf4 ♖xf4+ 36.♔e2 ♖f8!.

35.♛a3! ♚g8 36.♜h4



An ingenious idea. If 36…fxg3+, 37.♕xf8+ would win.

36…g5 37.♜g4 ♛a1+ 38.♚f2 fxg3+ 39.♚xg3 ♛e5+ 40.♚h3 h5 41.♜a4 g4+ 42.♚h4 ♜f5!

As the black king is able to look after himself.

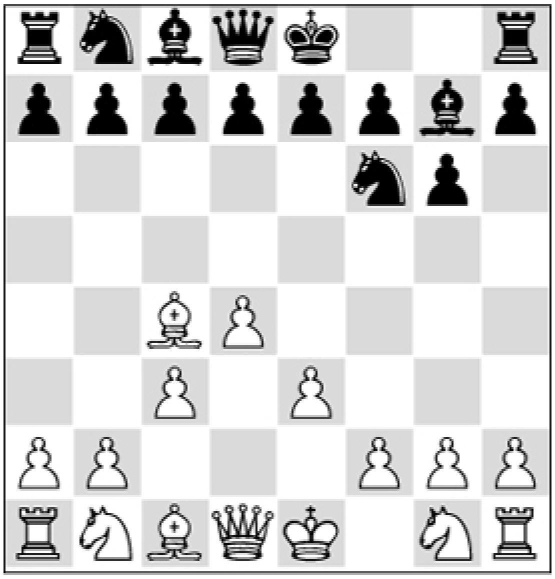
43.♜a8+ ♚g7 44.♛a7+ ♚h6 45.♛g1 ♛f6+

followed by mate with 46…♖f3+ 47.♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 48.♔h2 ♕h3#.
This game was honored with the first brilliancy prize.

Game 86

Aron Nimzowitsch
Jacob Gemzøe
Copenhagen 1928

1.e3 g6 2.c3 ♞f6 3.d4 ♝g7 4.♝c4

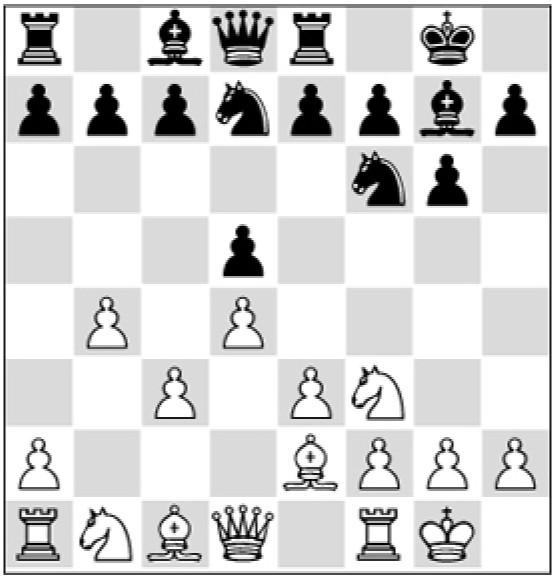


To provoke …d7-d5, but 4…d6, which White obviously seems to fear, would have been quite tolerable; e.g., 4.♗d3! d6 5.♘e2, with a set-up similar to that in the preceding game.

4…d5 5.♗e2 ♘bd7

5…♘c6 could be considered.

6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.b4!



The same stratagem as in Game 85. He believes he is well armed for both …e7-e5 and …♘e4 (he would simply leave the pawn on e5), so now he sounds the attack on the outermost flank.

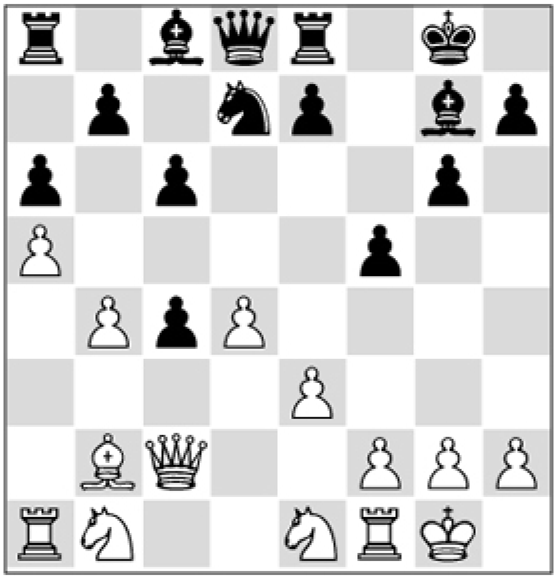
8…♞e4 9.a4! f5 10.a5

Taking the control of the b6-square away from his opponent, but this creates a dead point on b5, as will be seen presently. 10.c4 therefore should have deserved preference.

10…a6 11.♝b2 c6 12.♞e1 ♞d6

If 12…e5, then 13.♘d3 and 14.f4, with a subsequent ♘e5 and consolidation.

13.c4! ♞xc4 14.♝xc4 dxc4 15.♛c2

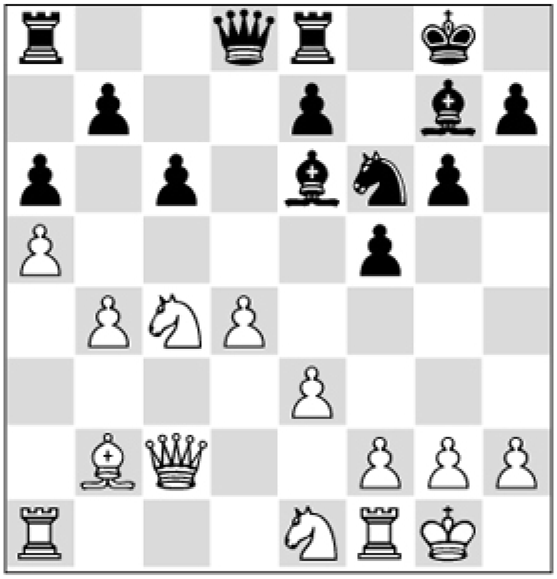


15…♞f6

Not good; cf. the next note. Correct was 15…e5, making room for both his bishops. Also playable, it seems, is 15…b5; e.g., 16.axb6 ♘xb6 17.♘a3 ♗e6 18.♘f3 ♔h8 19.♘d2 ♖b8, as the transaction 20.♘axc4 ♘xc4 21.♘xc4 ♖xb4 22.♘e5 would be quite agreeable to Black after 22…♗xe5 and 23…♖c4.

16.♞d2 ♝e6 17.♞xc4

We prefer 17.♘ef3.



17…♕c7

The attempt to take control of the light squares with 17…♗xc4 18.♕xc4+ ♘d5 would most likely fail to 19.♘d3 followed by ♖ae1, f2-f3, and e3-e4. Thus 15…♘f6, etc., would seem to be refuted.

18.♘d3 ♖ad8 19.♘f4 ♗d5 20.♘e5

White’s threat lies in the move sequence ♖ae1, f2-f3, and e3-e4; it is difficult to find anything to counter this.

20…♗h6 21.♖ae1

More circumspect is 21.♘fd3.

21…♖f8

21…♗xf4, then …e7-e6, would have allowed for a more stalwart resistance.

22.f3

22.♘fd3 first was better.

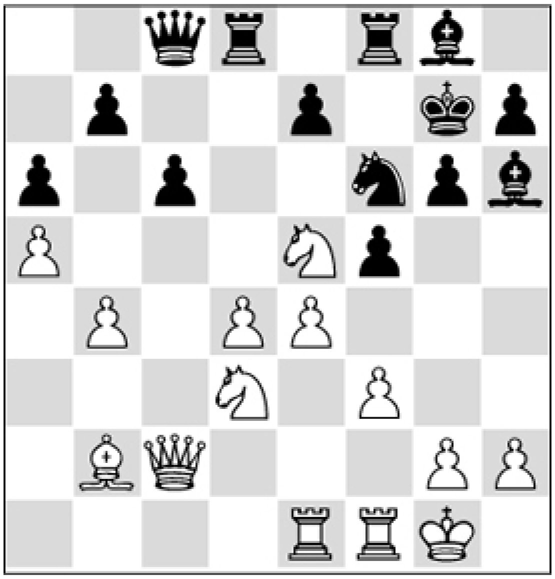
22…♔g7

Better here, too, is 22…♗xf4.

23.♘fd3 ♗g8 24.e4

Now White stands better.

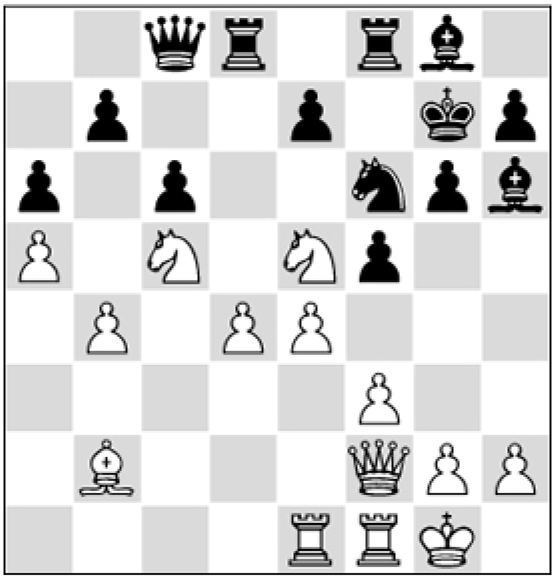
24…♕c8



25.♘c5

To refresh the memories of the ‘bygone flank attack’. But the obvious 25.♕e2 and g2-g4 also would have been very strong; e.g., 25…♔h8 26.g4 ♗g7 27.exf5 gxf5 28.g5 ♘d5 29.f4, when White obtains a kingside attack.

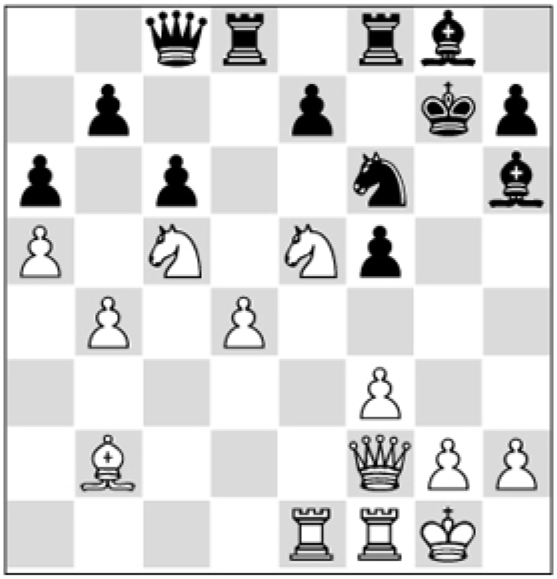
25…♚h8 26.♛f2 ♚g7



27.exf5

Now that the second player has lost all his grip on the light squares, the win should no longer present White with any great difficulties, especially as he has just about complete control of the dark squares. For instance, 27.d5 would have been decisive; e.g., 27…cxd5 28.exf5 gxf5 29.♗d4!, when Black is powerless against the intended assault (f3-f4 and ♖e1-e3-h3). Or 28…♕xf5 (instead of 28…gxf5) 29.g4 ♕c8 (29…♕f4? 30.♘ed3 or 30.♗c1) 30.f4. But the move played should decide matters even more quickly.

27…gxf5



28.f4

White would have won easily with 28.♕g3+ ♔h8 29.♕h4 ♔g7 30.g4 ♗f4 31.g5 ♘d5 32.♕h6+ ♔h8 33.♘g6#. After the thoughtless text move Black saves himself by a most charming concerted action of the defending pieces.

28…♞d5! 29.♛h4 ♜d6 30.♜f3 ♚h8 31.♜ef1 ♝g7 32.♜g3 ♜ff6 33.♜ff3 ♜h6 34.♛g5 ♜dg6! 35.♞xg6+ ♜xg6

Draw!! The queen cannot escape from the ‘perpetual check’.

The following game illustrates our stratagem with an example that is especially characteristic of modern tournament practice. The security in the center on which Black bases his flank diversions cannot in fact be immediately recognized as such. The pseudo-classical trend of thought, for instance, would flatly reject it as a fiction. And yet the hypermodern-oriented second player makes it the basis of a long-lasting flank attack. Let the game speak for itself.

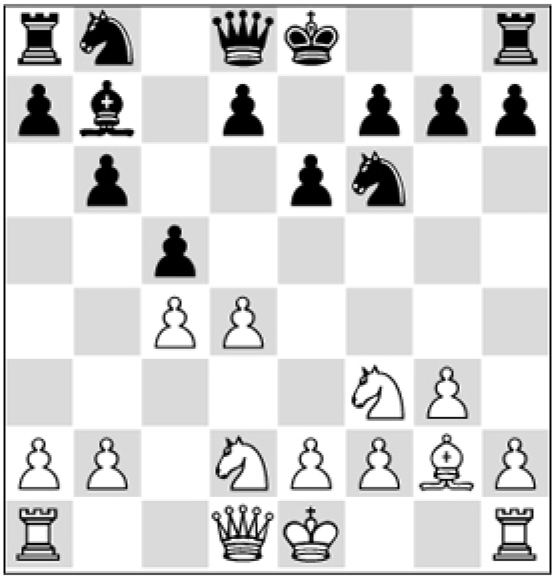
Game 87

Paul Johner

Aron Nimzowitsch

Berlin 1928 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 7.♘bxd2 c5!



Black considers his central position, after 8.dxc5 bxc5, to be altogether defensible.

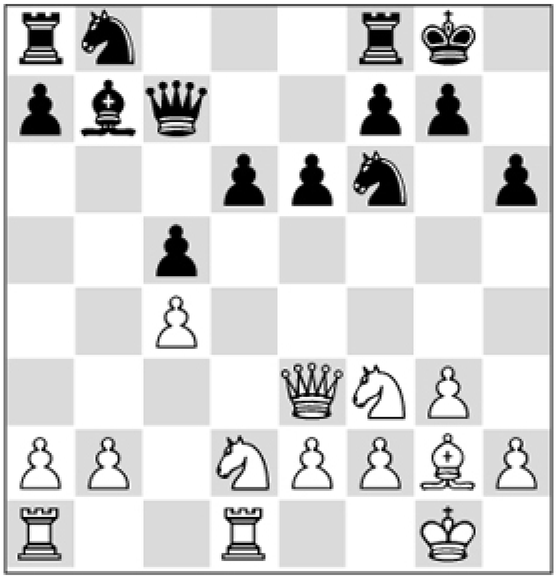
8.0-0

In our game at Berlin 1927, Bogoljubow chose the continuation 8.dxc5. But after 8…bxc5 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.♕c2 0-0 11.♖ad1 h6! (to prevent White's re-grouping with ♘g5 and ♘ge4) 12.a3 ♘c6 13.♖fe1 ♖ab8 14.♖b1 a5, he already felt compelled to see to the defense of his noticeable queenside weaknesses by playing 15.b3.

8…0-0 9.♕b3 ♕c7 10.♖fd1 h6

Black is not in any hurry.

11.♕e3 d6 12.dxc5 bxc5



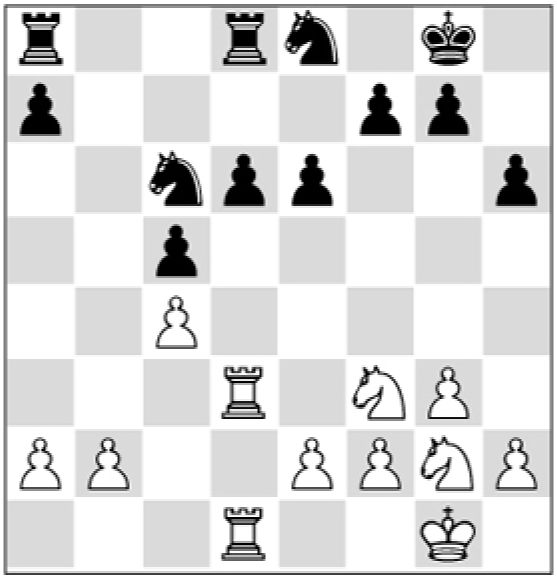
The pawn on d6, in spite of being backward, is as healthy as a prairie dweller!

13.♘e1 ♗xg2 14.♘xg2 ♕c6! 15.♕f3

He will not of course cede the central diagonal to Black, but now, after the exchange of queens, the black king can participate in the defense.

15…♕xf3 16.♘xf3 ♖d8 17.♖d3 ♘c6 18.♖ad1 ♘e8

This knight will soon be relieved by the king.



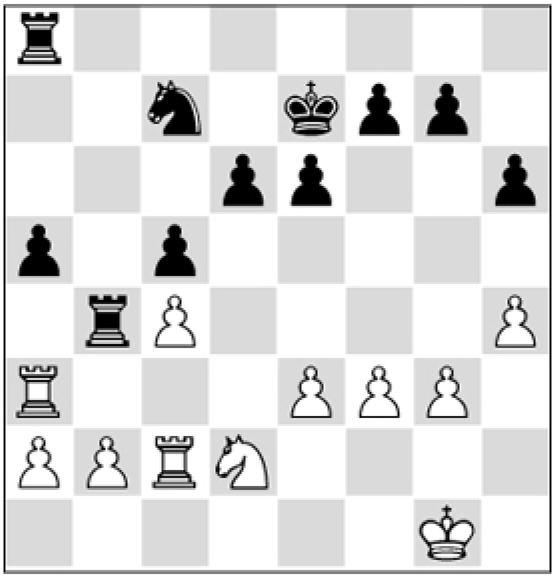
19.♖a3

An attacking move that in reality only looks like one… Black was already threatening, say, 19…♖db8, and if 20.b3, then 20…a5, etc. The text move therefore signifies a fine preventive maneuver against the threat indicated.

19…a6!

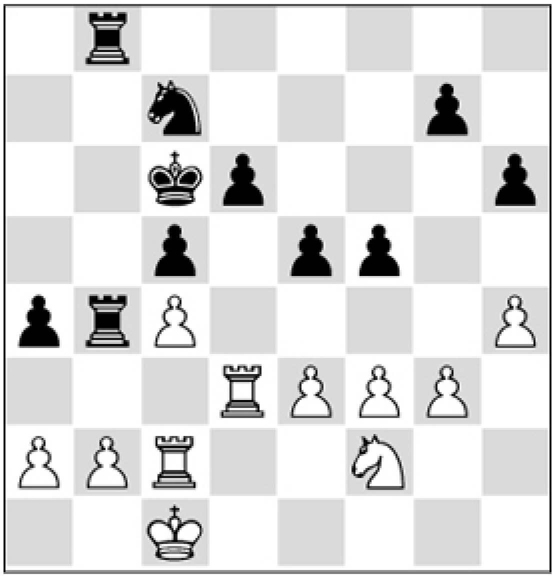
To neutralize the threat ♖a6 once and for all.

20.♗f4 ♖db8 21.♖d2 ♖b4 22.♖c2 ♔f8 23.e3 ♔e7 24.h4 ♗c7 25.♗d3 ♖b7 26.♗d2 a5 27.f3 ♗b4 28.♗xb4 ♖xb4



It is difficult for Black to put a fine point to his attack, as White has steadfastly refused to play the compromising b2-b3. But over time, additional weaknesses have appeared on the other wing.

29.♔f2 a4 30.♔e2 ♔d7 31.♔d1 ♔c6 32.♗e4 f5 33.♗f2 e5 34.♖d3 ♖ab8 35.♔c1



White has defended himself quite skilfully.

35…♘e6 36.a3! ♖b3 37.♖cd2 ♖xd3 38.♖xd3 ♘c7 39.♔c2 ♘a8

Threatening 40…♘b6 and an opportune …d6-d5.

40.e4 ♘b6 41.b3 axb3+ 42.♖xb3 ♖f8 43.♖c3 ♘a4 44.♖d3 ♘b6 45.♖c3 ♘a4 46.♖d3 ♘b6 47.♖c3

Draw.

It was far from the second player’s intention to settle for a draw, but in point of fact he overlooked the threefold repetition. Two moves ago he should have played 45…g6, threatening …h6-h5 and …f5-f4. If White plays 46.♔b3! ♖b8 47.♖d3, there could follow 47…fxe4 48.♘xe4 d5 49.cxd5+ ♘xd5+ 50.♔c4 (or 50.♔c2 c4) 50…♘b6+ 51.♔c3 ♘a4+. But for all that there probably was no more than a draw in it.

Throughout the game Black had the attack and the more compact pawn structure – our stratagem has acquitted itself well.

Game 88

Carl Nilsson

Aron Nimzowitsch

Eskilstuna 1921

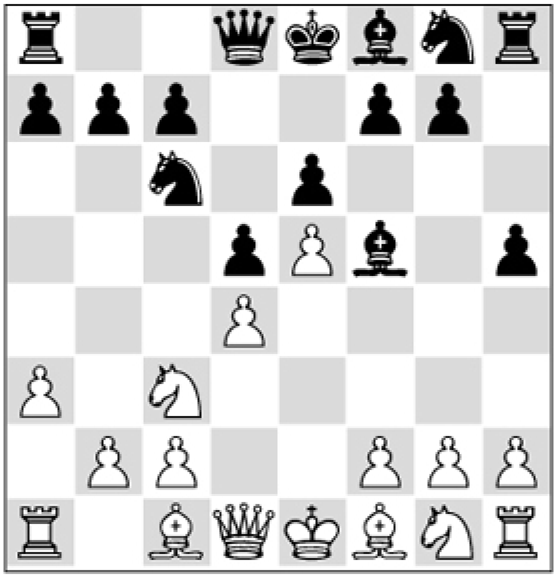
One of 34 simultaneous games

Motto: ‘A glance over at the flank, while having one’s mind on the center, is the deepest sense of position play.’

1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.a3

To be able to play 4.♘c3.

4…e6 5.♘c3 h5



Early preventive play against the white advance f2-f4, g2-g4, etc.

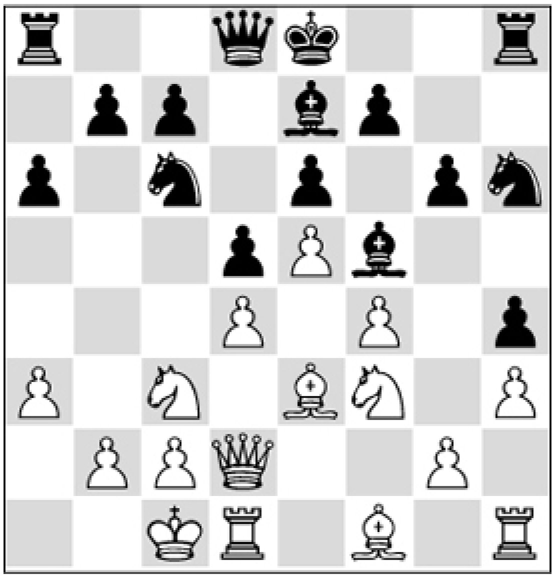
6.♗e3 g6 7.f4 ♘h6 8.♘f3 ♘g4!

To provoke a subsequent, weakening h2-h3.

9.♗g1 h4! 10.h3 ♘h6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.♕d2 a6!

Giving the impression of an intent to play …b7-b5 if White castles queenside.

13.0-0-0!



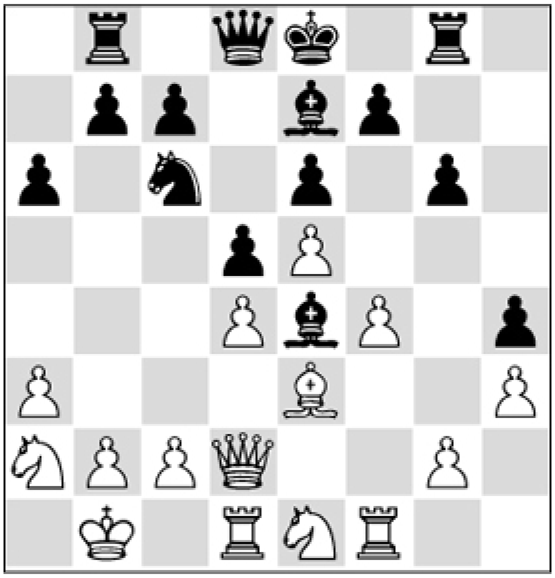
13…♖b8!

13…b5 would have led to the reply 14.♘a2 (not 14.♘xb5 because of 14…0-0 and …♖b8) 14…♖b8 15.b4, with a complete mummification of the position and at the same time a weakening of the c5-square. The subtle, discreet attacking play inherent in the text move, on the other hand, has an immediate effect.

14.♘a2 ♗e4!

Glancing over at the wings, with one's mind on the center, is the deepest sense of position play!

15.♘e1 ♘f5 16.♔b1 ♘g3 17.♖g1 ♘xf1! 18.♖xf1 ♖g8



To open the g-file and exert pressure against the backward pawn at g2.

19.♔a1 ♔d7

To establish a connection between the major pieces.

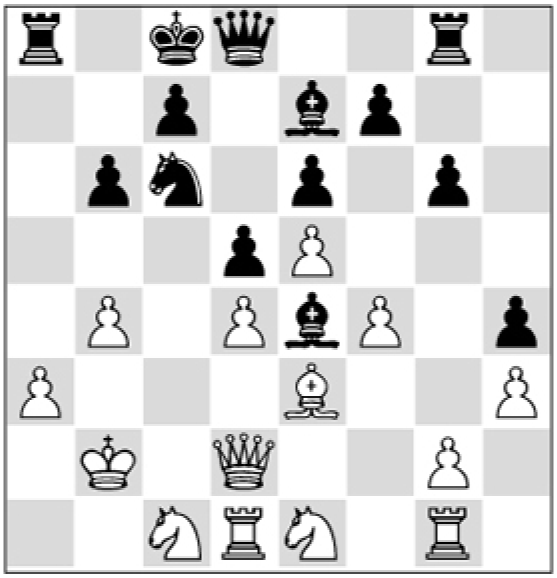
20.♖g1 ♔c8

Heading for b7.

21.♘c1 b6

Now …♘c6-a5-c4 is also threatened; the light squares are obviously difficult to defend.

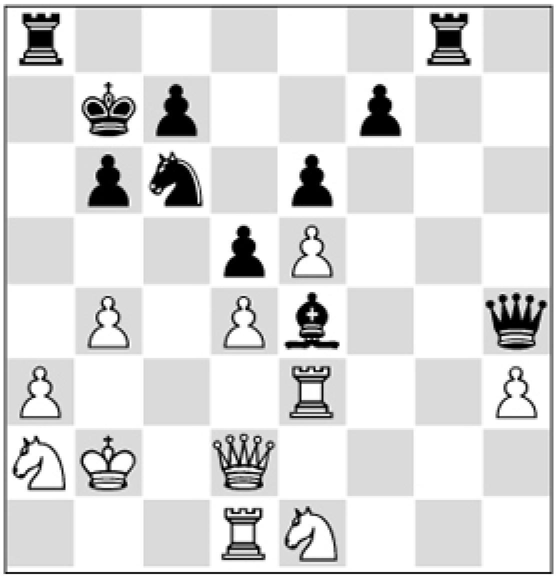
22.b4 a5 23.c3 axb4 24.cxb4 ♖a8 25.♔b2



25…♚b7

Here 25…♖xa3 was also possible, but Black wants to see all his positional opportunities (…g6-g5!) mature before striking out. Now, 26…♖xa3 is a powerful threat.

26.♘a2 g5 27.fxg5 ♝xg5 28.g4! hxg3 29.♖xg3 ♝xe3 30.♖xe3 ♛h4



Black has taken the g-file, and d4 and h3 are weaknesses.

31.♕c3 ♞a7 32.♖c1

Better was 32.a4, but Black is better in any case.

32…♛f2+ 33.♔b3 ♞b5 34.♕c6+ ♚b8 35.♕xb5 ♛xe3+

0-1

The Logos of this game is made clear by the moves 12…a6, 13…♖b8, and 14…♗e4 in reply to 14.♘a2. With 12…b6 and 13…♖b8, Black's queenside assumed a threatening posture: White felt induced to take counter-measures (14.♘a2), but which at the same time had a decentralizing effect. With 14…♗e4 White's decentralization was duly noted and the ball set in motion.

The considerable resultant effect made up of as-yet quiescent threats on the part of the flank attack may cause surprise. The explanation seems to us to lie in the fact that the balance had already been disturbed (hence even before 12…a6) in favor of the second player (he was clearly strong on the light squares). The sequence 12…a6, etc., therefore brought out a latent condition into actuality. A simultaneous game *logically* carried out from A to Z.

Apropos this theme, we refer back to the move …g7-g5 in Game 71, and further to the excellent game Sämisch-Alekhine, Dresden 1926.

4. The small but firm center

As we know, the possession of a firm, even if restrained, center justifies the launching of flank attacks, which in a certain sense are *based on* the stability of this center. In Games 85 and 86 the geographical distances between the center and the flank attacks were considerable; both actions consequently rested on their own foundations.

Matters are different in the 'Paulsen positions', which are popular today and which occur frequently, for instance, in Sämisch's games. Here the flank attack serves exclusively to liberate a somewhat cramped center and is therefore thought of as a relief action. Geographically, too, the distance between the center and the wing play is only slight. It is important for the student to study the strategy indicated here.

The two main requirements of a good 'Paulsen player' consist of:
a) prophylaxis; and
b) the art of maneuvering on interior lines.
We find both in the following game beginnings:

I. **Dr. Vidmar-Nimzowitsch**, Semmering 1926: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4+ 4.♗d2 ♕e7 5.e3 ♗xd2+ 6.♘bxd2 d6 7.♕c2 c5 8.g3 b6 9.♗g2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♘c6!** Even though White's e3-e4 is not to be feared in and of itself – for after that move there could always follow …cxd4; ♘xd4, with a Paulsen position – Black prefers preventive play. **11.a3 0-0 12.♖ad1 ♖fd8 13.♖fe1 ♖ac8 14.♘b3 cxd4 15.exd4 ♘b8!** The beginning of maneuvers on interior lines. **16.♘fd2 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕b7+ 18.♔g1 ♖c7** 18…d5 or 18…b5 would be poor because of the reply 19.c5. **19.♕d3 ♘bd7 20.f4 g6 21.♖c1 ♖dc8 22.h3 h5** A preventive move against g3-g4. **23.♖c3 d5!** And Black obtained the somewhat better game (24.cxd5 ♖xc3 25.bxc3 ♕xd5 26.c4 ♕d6, when the hanging pawns on c4 and d4 do not especially inspire confidence).

II. **Rubinstein-Sämisch**, Berlin 1926: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.dxc5 ♗xc5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗g5 b6 8.e3 ♗e7** For the envisioned position of the pawns on e6 and d6 the bishop belongs on e7. **9.♖d1 a6! 10.♗e2 ♗b7 11.0-0 d6 12.♖d2 0-0 13.♖fd1 ♖c8** The 'small center' e6 and d6 seems to be defensible also against a possible 14.♗xf6 gxf6! 15.♘e4? ♘b4; the move played is therefore appropriate. **14.♗f4 ♘e8 15.♕b1 ♘a5!** Pertinent to the struggle is the circumvallation of the small center, i.e., the pawn at c4. **16.b3 b5! 17.♘e4 ♗xe4 18.♕xe4 bxc4 19.bxc4 ♕c7 20.♕b1 ♖b8 21.♕c2 ♘b7** The d6-pawn is over-protected; what does this over-protection prove, which, as we shall see, is fully *justified*? Well, it bears witness to the *strength* of the d-pawn, for only a strong point is worthy of over-protection; see Over-Protection in Part III. **22.e4 ♗f6 23.♗e3 ♘c5 24.♘d4 ♗e7 25.♘b3 ♘f6 26.f3 ♖fc8 27.g4** An attacking try that is insufficiently motivated. **27…h6 28.♔g2 ♘fd7** The f6-square is made use of extensively in these maneuvers. **29.♘d4 ♖b6** and Black got the advantage along the b-file.

In light of what we have just said, it is clear that the 'small center' belongs to the hypermodern repertoire. The pseudo-classicists, who for their maneuvers (which by the way are not even all that original) require a good deal of terrain, would of course have felt completely suffocated. Or else they would have been incapable of preventing enemy breakthroughs in the long run, since the ‘preventive technique’ of that time was unequal to the task.

During the twenty years of my activity in the field of chess pedagogy, it has been my experience that the study of relevant games (here, those with the small center) tends to foster a healthy aversion to the ‘loose formation’ so unfortunately popular in the widest chess circles. We have occasionally detected this wholesome feeling in ourselves, for example, after completing simultaneous exhibitions, which, as we know, do not exactly have a beneficial effect on one’s tournament style.

We now give two games on the theme of the ‘small center’ and one on the ‘loose formation’.

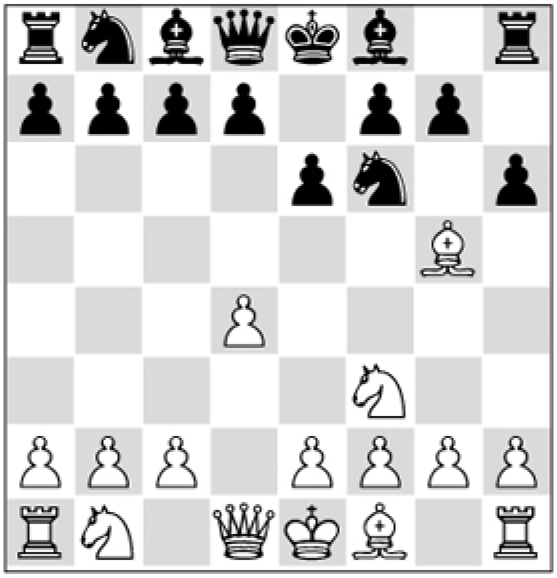
Game 89

José Capablanca

Aron Nimzowitsch

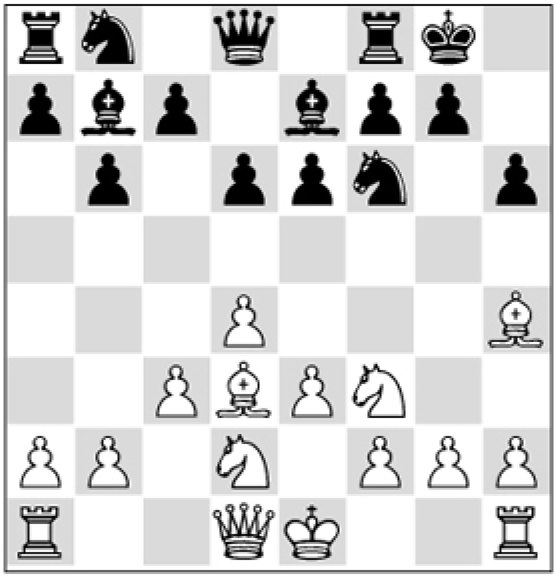
New York 1927 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♗g5 h6



Of questionable value. The increase in possible resources contingent on this move would appear to be less than the potential danger that may result from the loosening of Black’s position. And, in general, one must *take care not to overload the small center*! A large and active center can much better absorb some weakness on the wings; the small center is too ‘passive’ for this.

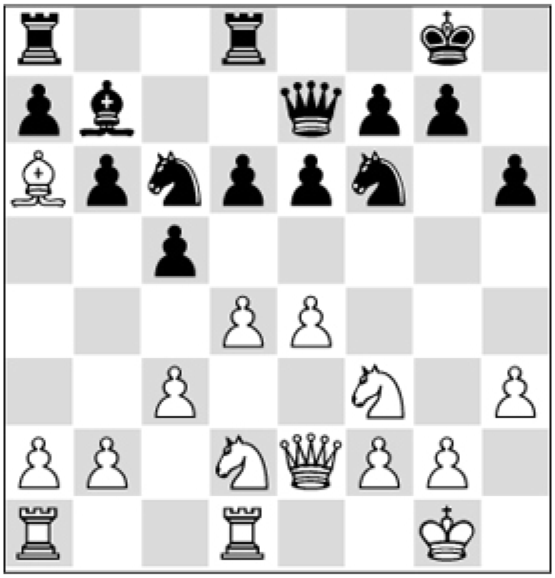
4.♝h4 b6 5.♞bd2 ♝b7 6.e3 ♝e7 7.♝d3 d6 8.c3 0-0



9.h3

To be able to play ♗g3 without being exposed to an exchange by …♘h5. Much more natural, however, is 9.♕e2 and 0-0-0, with a kingside attack. Instructive in this regard is the following opening sequence (Nimzowitsch-Vidmar) **1.e3 d5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.b3 ♝g4 4.♝b2 ♞d7 5.h3?** (giving us the present game, with colors reversed) **5…♝h5 6.♝e2 e6 7.♞e5 ♝xe2 8.♛xe2 ♝d6 9.♞xd7 ♛xd7 10.c4 c6 11.0-0 0-0-0 12.♞c3 ♝c7 13.d4 h5 14.c5 g5 15.b4 h4 16.b5 ♜dg8!**, when Vidmar won by a direct attack on the king.

9…c5 10.0-0 ♞c6 11.♛e2 ♞h5! 12.♝xe7 ♛xe7 13.♝a6 ♞f6 14.♜fd1 ♜fd8 15.e4



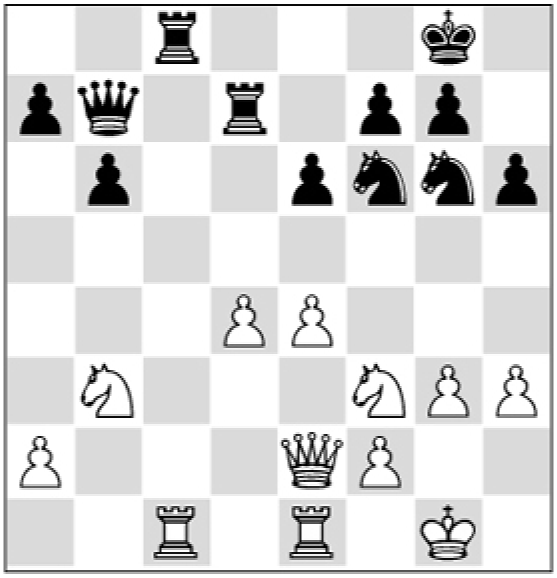
15…♝xa6!

Because he has at his disposal a maneuver that will prove illusory the supposed weakness of the light squares. Much weaker would instead be 15…e5 because of 16.d5, with chances for White on both wings.

16.♕xa6 ♛c7! 17.♖ac1 ♜d7 18.b4 ♜ad8 19.♕e2

The queen withdraws by her own volition.

19…♞e7 20.♖e1 ♞g6 21.g3 ♜c8 22.bxc5 dxc5 23.♘b3 cxd4 24.cxd4 ♛b7



White has achieved nothing at all.

25.♖xc8+ ♕xc8 26.♖c1 ♖c7 27.♖xc7 ♕xc7 28.♘fd2 ♕c3 29.♕a6 ♕c7 30.♕e2

Draw.

Characteristic of the small center were the slow relocations of the major pieces along interior lines (moves 16, 17, 18, 21, and 26 by Black).

Game 90

Egil Jacobsen

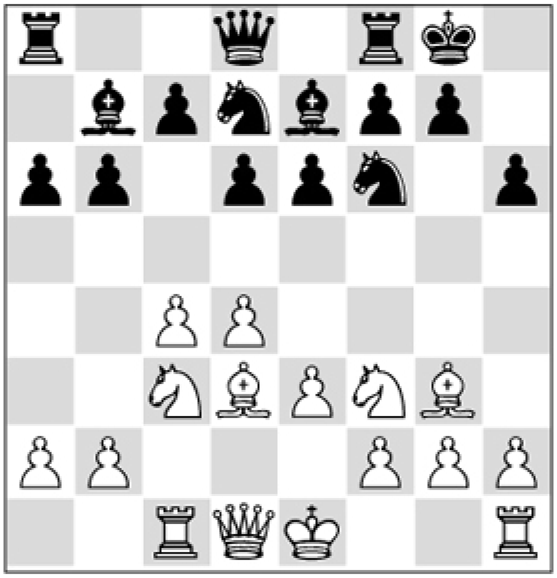
Aron Nimzowitsch

Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 b6 3.c4 ♗b7 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5 h6

Here this move seems more appropriate.

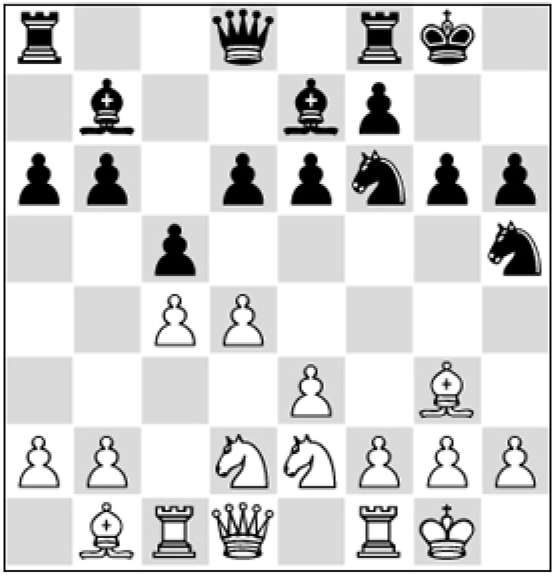
6.♗h4 ♗e7 7.e3 d6 8.♖c1 ♘bd7 9.♗g3 0-0 10.♗d3 a6



We observe that Black seems quite content in his dwelling (controlling only the first three ranks), since for the time being he clearly is not contemplating either …c7-c5 or …e6-e5. Instead, he comes up with a remarkable maneuver behind the lines, by which the intended …c7-c5 can acquire an even greater attacking value.

In White’s build-up, 8.♖c1 is difficult to understand, for …d6-d5 (is this indeed what the rook move was intended to forestall?) is hardly in the strategic plan of the second player.

11.0-0 ♘h5 12.♗b1 g6 13.♘e2 ♘df6 14.♘d2 c5



By which he already has secured, at the very least, a ‘Paulsenizing’ of the position (that is, …cxd4 followed by …♖c8). But Black is trying for more.

15.♘f4 ♘g7!

If we compare this position with that after White’s 11th move we get the impression that it is the d7-knight that has wandered to g7, whereas it is in fact the other knight that has gone there. This was a real behind-the-lines maneuver, with a switch of roles and places!

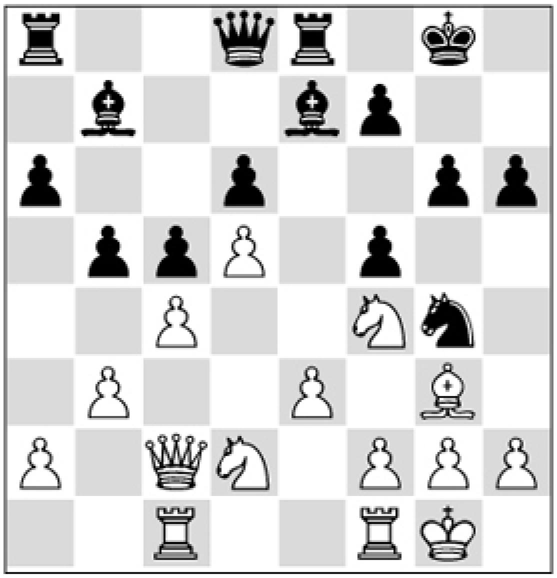
16.♕e2 ♘f5 17.♗xf5

Or 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♗xf5 exf5 and …♖e8 and …♗f8, followed by an attack on the queenside, when Black has abundant play.

17…exf5 18.d5 b5 19.b3 ♖e8 20.♕d3 ♘g4

Black now tries to gain control of squares along the e-file, and at the same time preventive measures are to be taken against White’s e3-e4. (That is to say, White is planning ♘e2 and e3-e4.)

21.♕c2



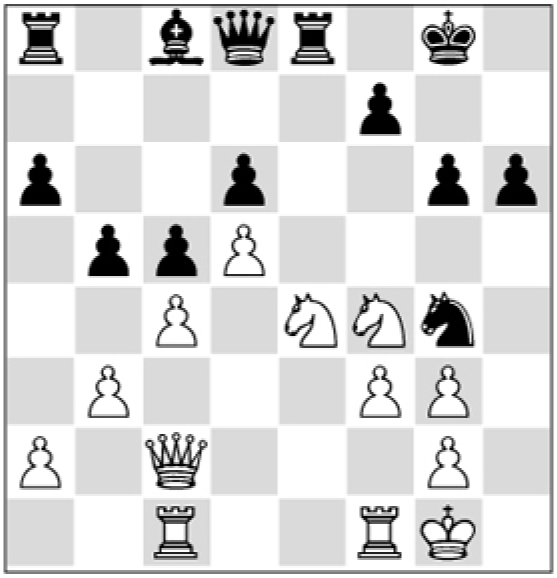
21…♝h4

The preventive measure indicated in the previous note! Similar but, we believe, of lesser effect, would be 21…♗c8; e.g., 22.♘e2! ♗f6 23.e4 fxe4 24.♘xe4 ♗f5 25.♘xf6+, etc.

22.e4

After this Black gets the distinctly better game. 22.♗xh4 ♕xh4 23.h3 ♘e5 24.♘d3 would seem to be an improvement.

22…♝xg3 23.hxg3 fxe4 24.♞xe4 ♝c8 25.f3!



25…♞f6

Not 25…♘e3 because of 26.♕c3! and a potential ♘f6+.

26.♘xf6+

26.♘c3 would be better.

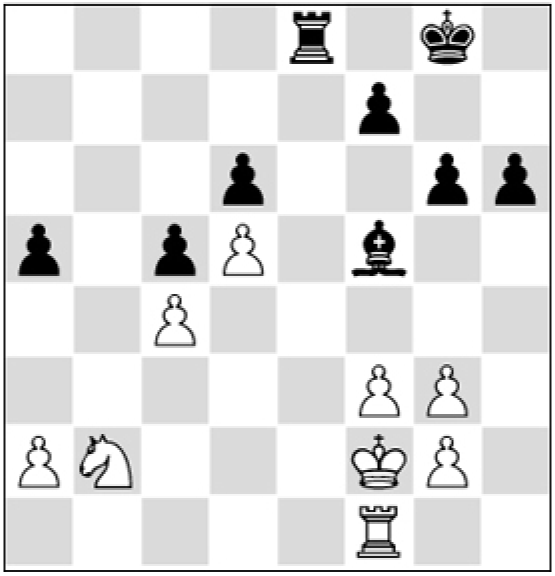
26…♕xf6 27.♕d2 ♖a7 28.♖ce1 ♖ae7 29.♖xe7 ♕xe7 30.♔f2 bxc4

White has safeguarded the squares along the e-file in a makeshift sort of way, but the weak c-pawn he now gets is more than his position can bear.

31.bxc4 a5 32.♘d3 ♕f6

Alternating maneuvers. Representing White’s weaknesses are the c-pawn, the e-file, and the b2-f6 diagonal.

33.♕b2 ♕xb2+ 34.♘xb2 ♗f5



The exchange of queens has not improved White’s lot. The diagonal b2-f6 has been made safe, certainly, but the pawn at c4 is less easy to protect than before.

35.♖c1 h5

Not 35…♖b8 36.♘d1, etc., as the white king is to be kept out as long as possible. The move played prepares an eventual kingside pawn storm.

36.♖c3 a4 37.♘d1

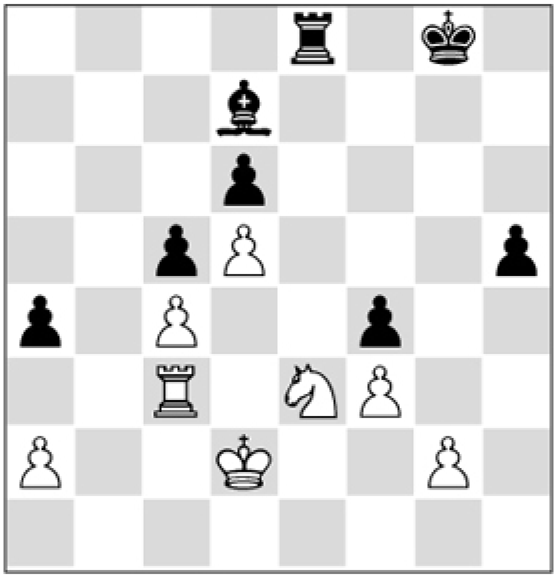
If 37.♘xa4 ♖a8 38.♘b2! (38.♘b6? ♖xa2+ and …♖a6 and the black king approaches the surrounded knight) 38…♖xa2 39.♖b3, then 39…

g5, with a superior endgame. If, on the other hand, 37.♖a3, then 37…♖b8 38.♘xa4? ♖a8 and wins.

37…g5 38.♞e3 ♝d7 39.♚e2 f5 40.♚d2

After this the kingside becomes weak, but 40.f4 (which would have been better) would not have sufficed; e.g., 40…gxf4 41.gxf4 h4, or 40…♔f7 41.fxg5 ♔g6, and in either case White would have been faced with difficulties.

40…f4! 41.gxf4 gxf4



42.♞d1?

The correct move of course would be 42.♘c2, and ♘e1 if needed, but even in that event Black would get a strong endgame attack; e.g. 42.♘c2 ♔f7 43.♘e1 ♔f6 44.♖c2 ♖b8 45.♔c3 ♖b1 46.♖e2 ♖c1+! 47.♘c2 ♗f5 followed by a general exchange and a winning pawn ending, since the black king penetrates to g3.

42…♚f7

and Black won easily:

43.♞f2 ♜g8 44.♚e2 ♜xg2 45.♜c1 ♝f5 46.a3 h4 47.♜f1 ♚f6 48.♚d1 h3 49.♚e2 h2 50.♜a1 ♝d3+ 51.♚xd3 ♜xf2 52.♚e4 ♚g5 53.♜b1 ♜e2+ 54.♚d3 ♜e3+

And White resigned.

In this ending the *reflexive weakness* of White’s kingside was noteworthy: the weakness of the white queenside was as it were also transferred to the other wing, so that the black f-, g-, and h-pawns could be seen as a qualitative *majority* and for that reason were able to advance – and not without success. The game itself is typical of the hypermodern attempt to carry out difficult maneuvers even in circumstances involving unfavorable terrain. The way in which Black, starting from a fearfully constricted position, was able slowly but surely to gain ground, and finally to obtain a strong endgame attack – all this makes the game both instructive and enjoyable. But for all that, the small center again acquitted itself splendidly.

Game 91

Eigil Hansen
Aron Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1928

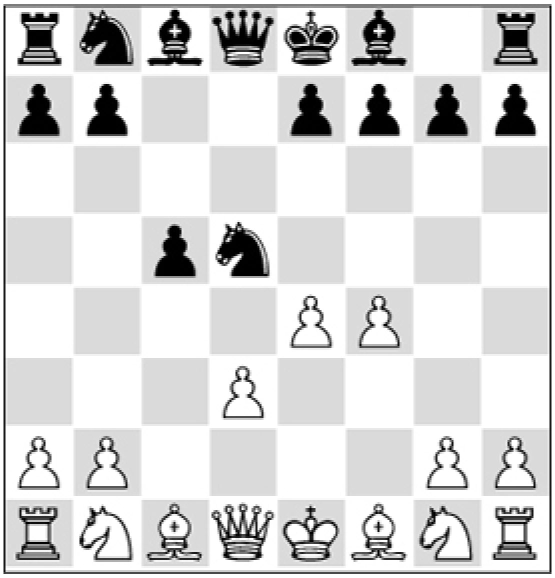
1.c4 c5 2.f4

This move makes a somewhat strange impression, but, as will soon be seen, it is not the move that is wrong but the impression! How pathetic it is to judge a move merely by its appearance, an approach that at the time of the pseudo-classicists was, sadly, still very much in vogue!

2…♘f6 3.d3 d5

Else there follows 4.e4, with a solid formation.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4



Compare the following opening sequence: 1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 (the so-called Dresden stratagem, introduced by the author). The position reached by Hansen certainly resembles the one just cited in principle – the d3-pawn on an open file! – but shows an improvement in the fact that the resource …♘xc3 followed by …g7-g6 seems to have been eliminated. Mr. Hansen deserves recognition!

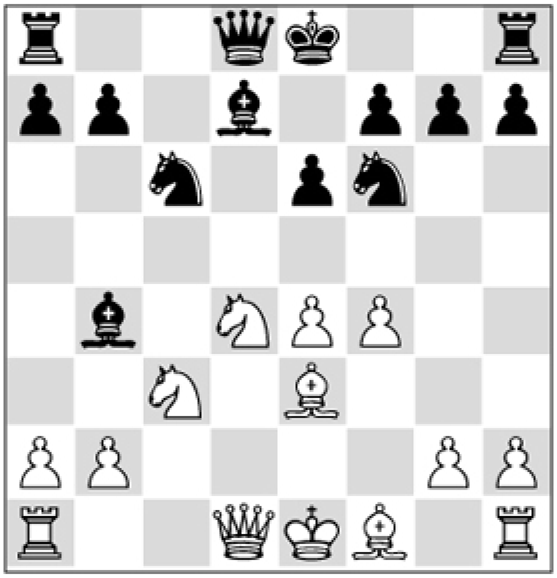
5…♘f6 6.♗e3! e6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗d7

To make d3-d4… easier!

9.d4?

Much more solid seemed 9.h3, with ♗e2 to follow; e.g., 9…♘h5? 10.♔f2 and 11.g4. By playing the text move the player of the white pieces makes it known that he lacks feeling for how to play the solid formation – a move like d3-d4(?) would certainly not have occurred to a player such as, for instance, Sämisch!

9…cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♗b4



White’s game is already suspended in mid-air…

11.♘xc6 ♗xc6 12.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 13.e5

White was forced to make concessions in the center; he is now afflicted with light-square weaknesses.

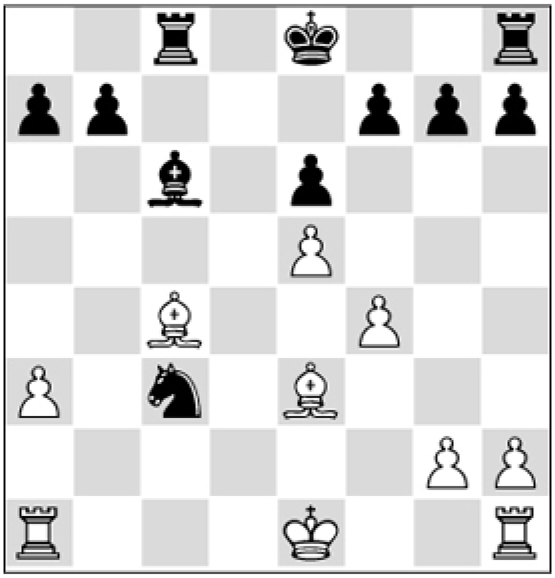
13…♘e4 14.a3

A clever resource; he is playing for bishops of opposite colors.

14…♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♘xc3 16.♗c4

16.♗xa7 was inadmissible because of 16…♘d5, when the f4-pawn cannot be protected (17.g3? ♘xf4 18.gxf4 ♗xh1).

16…♖c8



The right strategy when the opponent’s formation is loose! Leave everything ‘hanging’ and create further tension!

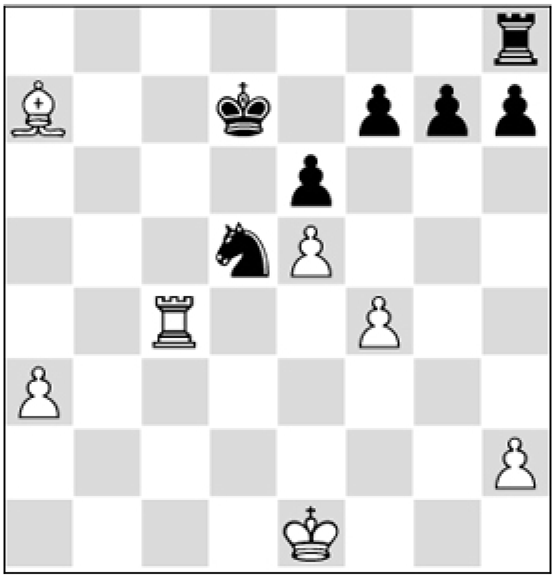
17.♖c1 ♝xg2 18.♖g1 ♜xc4 19.♖xg2 b5 20.♖gc2

Or 20.♖xg7 ♚e7 and …♜hc8, with dominant threats.

20…♞d5

A very solid knight!

21.♖xc4 bxc4 22.♖xc4 ♚d7 23.♗xa7



23…♜c8

The triumph of the firm formation! The resourceful player of the white pieces has regained all that can be regained, namely, all of the *material* that had been lost. But there he is with a ‘butterfly’ at f4, a ‘greyhound’ at a7, and two ‘mangy sheep’ on a3 and h2, while the king sits enthroned a suitable distance away, on e1.

There now follows a conclusion replete with terrors!

24.♜e4

After 24.♖xc8 ♔xc8 the ‘butterfly’ would bite the dust.

24…♜c1+ 25.♚f2

On 25.♔d2 there would follow 25…♖h1 26.♖e2 ♖a1! (not at once 26…♘xf4 because of 27.♖f2 g5 28.♗e3) 27.♗c5 ♘xf4.

25…♜c2+ 26.♚g3

Or 26.♔g1 ♖c3 27.a4 ♖f3.

26…♜c3+ 27.♚g4

A mistake in time pressure, but other moves would not have saved him.

27…f5+

And White resigned, for if 28.exf6 there follows of course 28…♘xf6+, winning a rook.

The weakness of the ‘large center’ that has been advanced all too impulsively is shown here with all the clarity one could wish for.

5. The asymmetric treatment of symmetrical variations

Followers of the pseudo-classical school had a marked predilection, incomprehensible today, for symmetrical variations. Not only that, they also knew how to take this rather unpleasant business and wrap it up in fine scientific terms. They implied that many positions and openings had a *natural tendency* toward symmetry, that it would accordingly be a sacrifice of the intellect to wish to avoid this God-willed symmetry, and that all such attempts were unsound and inevitably would lead to a loss against accurate play on the part of one’s opponent.

Let us consider the matter more closely by means of the following example: **1.d4 d5** What objection could there be against the asymmetric move 1…♘f6? **2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 c5?** In the quest for symmetry or an equalized position; it is typical that this loosening move was considered the only sound defense. Correct, of course, is only the asymmetric …

♘f6 followed by …♘bd7, etc. **4.e3?** The correct reply by the thinking of that time; the only proper continuation of course is 4.dxc5 followed by ♘f3 and g2-g3, commonly known as the Schlechter-Rubinstein variation. **4…♞c6 5.♞f3 ♞f6 6.♝d3** ♗d6 If someone had hit upon the idea of playing 6…♗e7 at this point, the pundits – during the Tarrasch period –would have turned up their noses at it, and yet this deviation from symmetrical development comprises the only *logical* continuation. The weakness of the bishop move to d6 lies in the fact that the pawn at d5 is now in need of protection. With 6…♗e7 the queen is allowed her full activity on the d8-d5 line. For example, **6…♝e7!** Instead of 6…♗d6. **7.0-0 0-0 8.♛e2!** Each player emphasizes *his own* chances: Black, the play against the d-pawn; White, the kingside attack supported by the bishop on d3. **8…cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♝xc4 ♞xd4 11.♞xd4 ♛xd4**, when it is difficult to predict the outcome. Hence even a superficial examination gives the impression that every chess game is full of problems – to which, however, symmetrical chess, fearful and unimaginative, prefers to give a wide berth!

This impression is strengthened still further when other symmetrical variations are drawn upon for purposes of comparison. In the French Exchange Variation, after **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♝d3 ♝d6**, the king’s knights on both sides can be developed either centrally or in a ‘diversionist’ way. The first possibility of development lies in ♘f3/…♘f6, the second in ♘e2/…♘e7. It must be added by way of explanation that the diversionary development (♘e2/…♘e7) would have to go hand in hand with a concurrent defense of the center (the breakthrough points e4 and e5 should be defended, respectively, with f2-f3 and …f7-f6); otherwise such development would be strategic nonsense. (Diversions on the wings, undertaken without adequate security in the center, have been shown on more than one occasion in this book to lead ad absurdum.)

It follows, with *compelling* logic (although many in the chess world will be inclined to cast off this ‘compulsion’), that the development ♘f3 must be answered by …♘e7, and conversely, ♘e2 with …♘f6!

This asymmetric treatment, advocated by Svevonius, is far superior in strategic Logos to the symmetrical method.

Let us now observe how clearly this contrast in battle plans finds its expression. In 1925 the author played the following game in a simultaneous exhibition at Aalesund (**Strande-Nimzowitsch**): **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♝d3 ♝d6 5.♞f3 ♞e7! 6.0-0 ♞bc6 7.♝e3** To weaken the effect of …♗g4. **7…♝f5 8.♞c3 0-0 9.♜e1 ♝xd3** Initiating a knight maneuver that is meant to combine stabilization of the center with a redoubled aspiration to attack on the flank. **10.♛xd3 ♞b4 11.♛d2 c6 12.a3 ♞a6 13.♜e2** Quite rightly perceiving that his chances lie in the center, but wouldn’t 13.♗g5 be preferable technically? **13…♞c7 14.♜ae1 ♞e6 15.♛d3** 15.♘g5 would be harmless in view of the possible reply 15…♘g6; e.g., 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♗g5 ♕c7. **15…♞g6** By which Black seeks to curb his opponent’s aspirations in the center. **16.g3 ♜e8 17.♝c1** The central lines have been cleared for the attack, but Black has already taken precautions. **17…♛d7 18.♞d1** For better or worse, 18.♘e5 had to be played; the occupation of the outpost at e5 in fact constitutes the only possible continuation of White’s central initiative. **18…♜e7 19.♞e3? ♞ef4** The diversion now comes with weighty effect. Correct, as before, was 19.♘e5; after 19…♗xe5 20.dxe5, 20…♖ae8 would follow, when the advance 21.f4 could be intercepted with the promising pawn sacrifice 21…♘c5 22.♕d4 ♘e4 23.♕xa7 f6 24.exf6 gxf6. Then we would have before us an interesting case where persistent defense in the center has led to centralization, a favorable outcome to which must be ascribed, *inter alia*, the covert cooperation of Black’s diversionary plans. After the faulty text move it is all over. **20.gxf4 ♞xf4 21.♛d2 ♛h3** and White resigned.

In this game Black protected e5 indirectly by permitting a knight to settle itself there, knowing that in so doing it would be weakened in its effect. The knight incursion, as we said, could also have been prevented directly, with …f7-f6.

We now proceed to the presentation of the games and only wish to observe in summation that we are convinced that the obsession with symmetrical development deserves an assessment as nothing more than a testimonium paupertatis of an unimaginative era.

The two following games are devoted to the combination of flank attack and defense of the center.

Game 92

Jorgen Möller

Aron Nimzowitsch

Casual game, Copenhagen 1923

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.a3 ♗a5

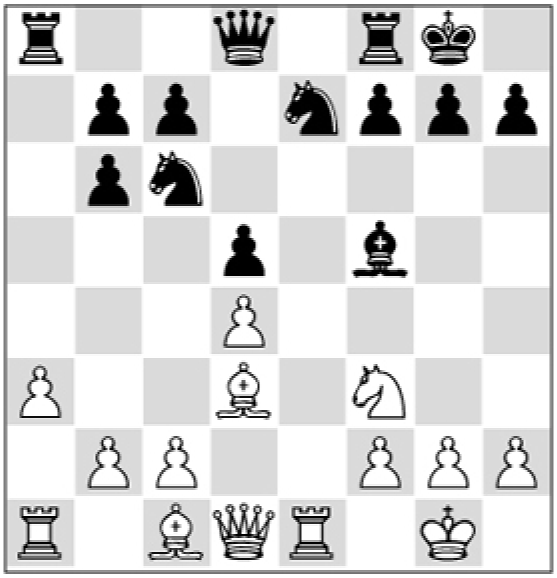
If 6…♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♗f5 8.♗d3 ♘ge7 9.0-0 0-0, then 10.♗f4, when White, with decent enough central action, would have the advantage, not to be underrated, that of the two bishops at d3 and f5 his would be the *better protected* one.

7.♗b5 ♘e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘a4 ♗b6 10.♘xb6 axb6 11.♗d3 ♗f5

Black is not only better developed, he also has the sturdier formation. White’s knight maneuver simply cost too much time.

12.♖e1

The central operation, which, a priori, will not be judged especially optimistically (see the previous note).



12…♕d7

Why does Black at this point omit the utterly obvious 12…f6, by which the enemy central action just initiated would be nipped in the bud? For without ♘e5, that is, without the occupation of an outpost on the e-file, White, by all appearances, cannot make progress along the central file in question! The answer is of relevance to the correct appraisal of the positions characterized by a knight at f3 vs. a knight at e7. The threat ♘e5 is not yet a real one – at present it would only lead to the worsening of his own position. For example, 13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 and White's majority on the kingside would have little mobility. On the other hand, it is just 13…f6 that would give fresh momentum to White's play down the e-file, for then e6 would be vulnerable to attack. And the moral of the story? Well, if it turns out that …f7-f6 can be deferred, the e6-square must first be strengthened. Once this is done, …f7-f6 may be chosen without concern.

Let us now devote ourselves to a thorough analysis of the move 12…f6, which will prove most instructive: 12… f6 13.♘h4 (an interesting try) 13…♘xd4! (besides this, 13…♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♕d7 15.♗d2 g5 and 16…♕f5 would also be a solid and proper continuation) 14.♘xf5 (or A, below) 14…♘dxf5 15.♕g4 ♘d6! (if 15…♕c8, then 16.♕h3, with the threat 17.g4) 16.♗f4! f5 17.♕h3 ♕d7 18.♖e2 ♘g6! 19.♗xd6 cxd6 20.g3 ♘e5 and Black is somewhat better placed. Please note that it was only with difficulty that Black was able to repel White's attack.

Or A) 12…f6 13.♘h4 ♘xd4! 14.♖xe7 ♗xd3 15.♖e3 ♘xc2 16.♖xd3 ♘xa1 17.♗e3 (this does not look bad, but there follows:) 17…♕e8 18.♕xa1 ♕e4! 19.♖d4 ♕e6 20.♕a2 ♖ad8 21.♘f3 c5 22.♖d1 and now perhaps 22…♔h8 followed by …♕c6, and the pawn phalanx is ready to march. In this line, too, Black would have a marked, though slight, advantage (a position for Capa!).

We are now in a position to sum up: 12…f6 may be good enough, to be sure, but under all circumstances it leads to a temporary loosening of Black's firm formation – hence the text move must be spoken of as more in accordance with the position, especially since ♘e5 at this moment would only be a futile gesture.

13.♘e5?

The 'futile gesture'! 13.♗f4 presents a much better appearance.

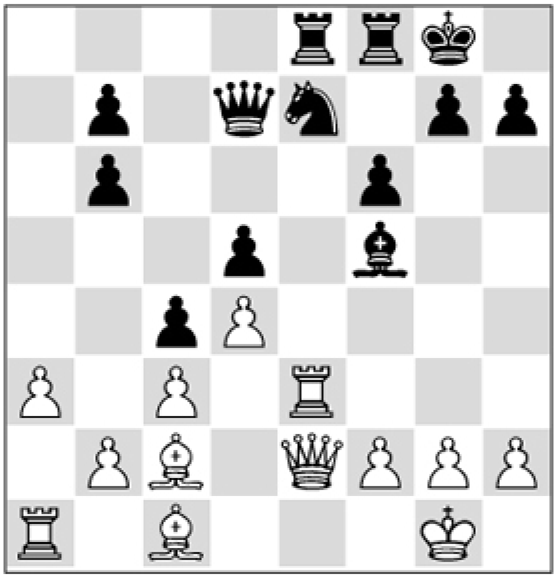
13…♘xe5 14.♖xe5

After 14.dxe5, too, Black’s game would be preferable.

14…♖ae8 15.♕e2 f6

Only now can this be played in good conscience.

16.♖e3 c5 17.c3 c4 18.♗c2



18…g5!

Only now, after felicitously safeguarding his center, is Black justified in bringing his planned diversion to fruition. The text move creates for the knight, eager to attack, a base at h4.

19.b3 ♗xc2 20.♕xc2 ♘f5 21.♖xe8 ♖xe8

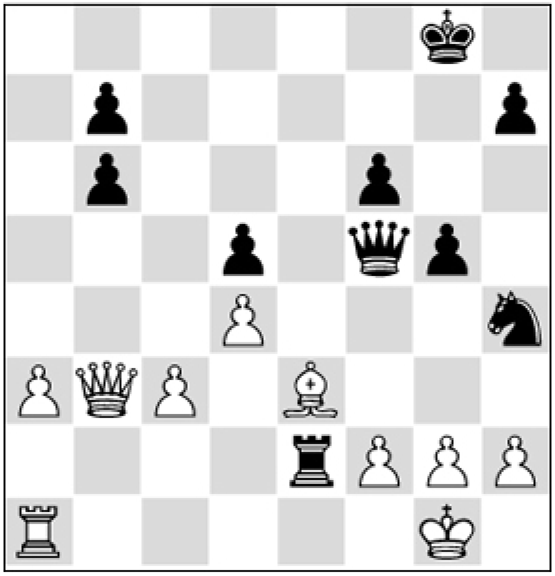
Now Black has taken over the e-file as well; the central action begun by White with the untimely 13.♘e5 must therefore be regarded as a complete failure.

22.♗d2 ♘h4

Cf. the note to the 18th move.

23.♕d1 cxb3 24.♕xb3 ♖e2 25.♗e3 ♕f5

Here, too, Black has to give thought to the thematic combination of flank attack and defense in the center; the d5-square, for instance, cannot be left unprotected even for a moment.



26.♛b5? ♛e4!

Instead of 26.♕b5, 26.♕b1 had to be played, although even in this case too the game could not be saved; e.g., 26.♕b1 ♕g4 27.♕f1 h6! 28.h3 ♕e4 and …f6-f5-f4, etc.

27.♚f1 ♜xe3

0-1

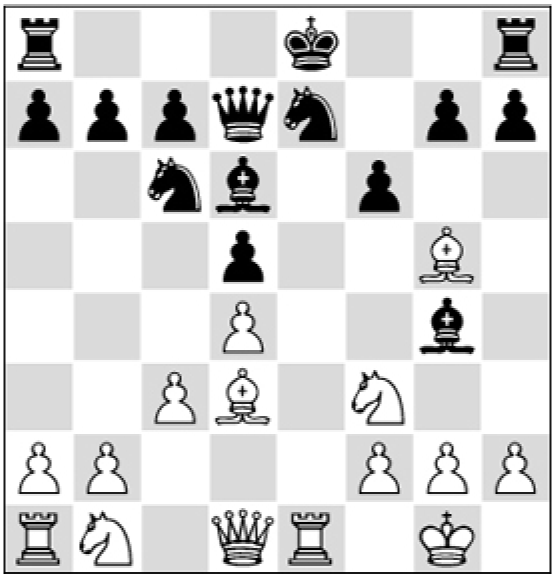
Game 93

David Enoch

Aron Nimzowitsch

Berlin 1927 (1)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♘f3 ♝d6 5.♝d3 ♘c6 6.c3 ♘ge7 7.0-0 ♝g4 8.♜e1 ♛d7 9.♝g5 f6



The e6-square is strongly fortified, so Black can play …f7-f6 without concern.

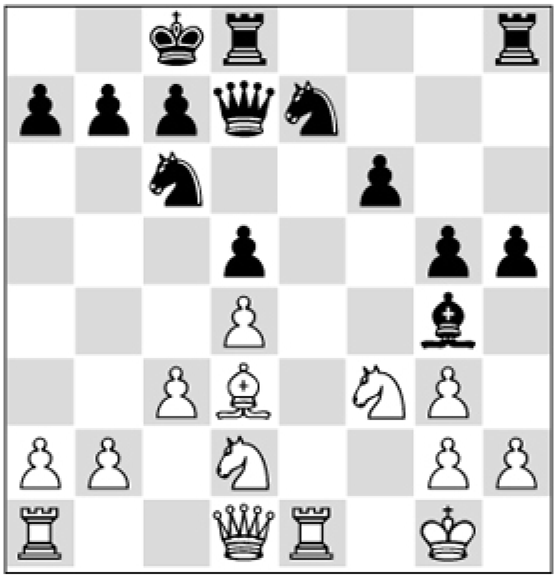
10.♝h4 h5

A minor innovation! If now 11.♗g6+ ♔f8 12.♕c2?, then 12…♘xg6 13.♕xg6 ♗f5, winning the queen.

11.♞bd2 g5 12.♝g3 ♝xg3

Black just has to put up with the weakness at c5 that is created by this move.

13.fxg3! 0-0-0



14.b4

The position is a most difficult one to assess, in particular because of the great multiplicity of theaters of war present, here comprised of both wings and the center (e-file). But this much is already certain: commitment to the idea of flank attacks may under no circumstances lead to a neglect of the centrally located theater of operations.

It seems to us of vital importance for both players concurrently to keep the central region under observation (White stressing offensive play and Black defensive).

In light of this, it is obvious that the diversionary move b2-b4 is not to our taste. To be considered instead was the re-grouping 14.♖e3, 15.♕f1, and 16.♖ae1.

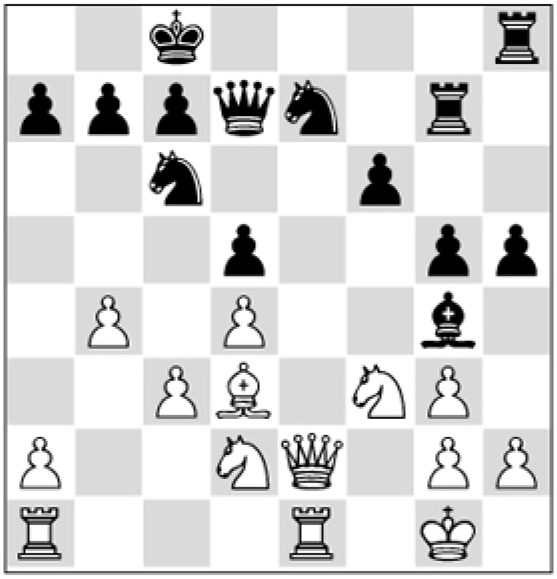
Possible as well, and leading to interesting play, is the continuation 14.♘b3; e.g., 14…♕d6 (if 14…b6?, then 15.♘c5!) 15.♘c5. Now 15…h4 would be refuted as follows: 16.♕b3 ♘a5 (16…b6 would lose the exchange without any real compensation after 17.♗a6+ ♔b8 18.♘b7; e.g., 18…♕d7 19.♘xd8 ♘xd8 20.♕b5 ♕d6 21.♕b4) 17.♕a4 b6 18.b4 hxg3 (White’s position now looks dubious) 19.bxa5! (not 19.♗a6+, as it seems desirable to have this bishop on d3 for the purpose of hindering a potential …♘f5) 19…bxc5 (White threatened the annihilating 20.axb6) 20.dxc5!! (a delightful winning line; bad would be 20.♖xe7 c4!) 20…♕xc5+ 21.♔h1 ♗xf3 (he was powerless against the double threat 22.♗a6+ and 22.♕xg4) 22.♗a6+ ♔b8 23.♖ab1+ ♔a8 24.♗b7+ ♔b8 25.♗xd5+ ♔c8 26.♗e6+ and mate next move.

So after 14.♘b3 ♕d6 15.♘c5 Black has to renounce 15…h4. Good, and in accordance with the position, is 15…♖de8. The sequel could be 16.♕b3 (16.♕a4? h4 17.b4 ♔b8 18.b5 ♘d8 and White is in danger) 16…♘d8 17.♖e3 ♘ec6 18.♖ae1 ♖xe3 19.♖xe3 h4 20.♘d2 hxg3 21.hxg3, with a more or less balanced position. This latter variation offers an example of how the required coordination between central and wing play is to be carried out in practice. In the game at hand, White gives little attention to the central idea, hence Black gets an opportunity to implement the necessary security in the center with a minimum of forces, so that he can throw all his available troops at the kingside.

14…♖dg8

The purpose of this becomes clear on the next move. Of course, 14…♖de8 would also be good and safe.

15.♕e2 ♖g7!



With this, Black obtains just enough security for the e-file. The g7-rook now bears responsibility for the coordination-idea we have repeatedly mentioned.

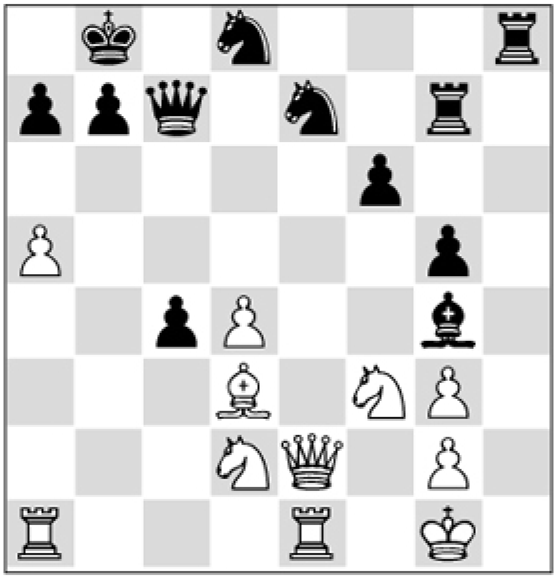
16.a4

The central initiative 16.h3 ♗f5 17.♗xf5 ♘xf5 18.♕e6 would founder on the reply 18…g4.

16…♕d6 17.a5 h4 18.b5 ♘d8 19.b6 ♚b8! 20.bxc7+

20.c4 looks a bit better.

20…♕xc7 21.c4 hxg3 22.hxg3 dxc4!

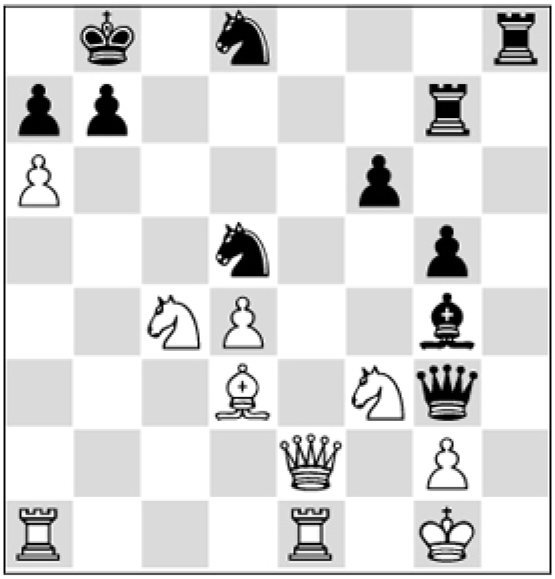


On the one hand making the d5-square available to the black knight, and on the other diverting the d2-knight from the defense of the kingside.

23.♘xc4

If 23.♗xc4, then 23…♘f5 and a decisive attack.

23…♛xg3 24.a6 ♞d5



25.♗e4

Interesting is the variation 25.axb7 ♘f4 26.♕a2 a6! (not 26…♖xb7 because of 27.♖eb1, with the threat 28.♕xa7+) and Black wins.

25…♞f4 26.♕b2 ♗xf3 27.♗xf3 ♜gh7

0-1

On the 14th move White neglected to play a knight to c5. In consequence, both his central pressure and the attack against the king evaporated. Black, in contrast, appreciated the need, with 14…♖g7, to combine defensive play in the center with a plan of attack on the wing. And behold, not only did the implementation of his attack succeed completely, but the rook on g7 fully came into its own as a defender. Its protective effect extended beyond the center all the way to b7 and a7. A most instructive example of the asymmetric method of play.

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Game 94

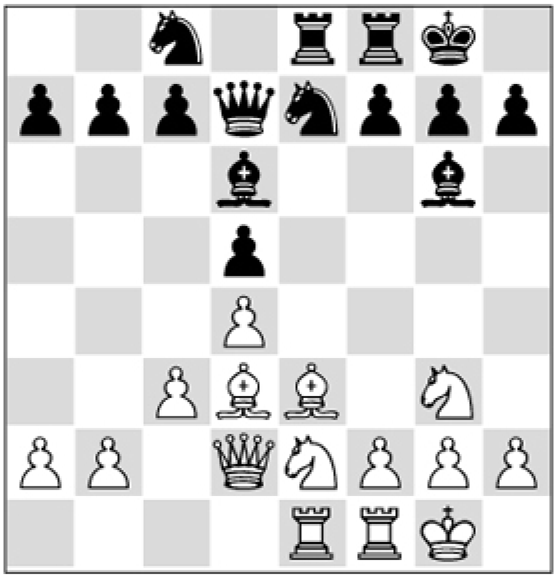
Frank Marshall
Aron Nimzowitsch
New York 1927 (13)

In this game both sides develop their knights to e2 and e7, respectively, and the first part of the game is fairly monotonous.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♗d3 ♘e7 6.♘e2 ♗f5 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘g3 ♗g6 9.♘ce2 ♗d6 10.♗f4 ♘bc6 11.♕d2 ♕d7 12.♖ae1 ♖ae8

But now some life gets infused into this arid game!

13.c3 ♘c8! 14.♗e3 ♘6e7!



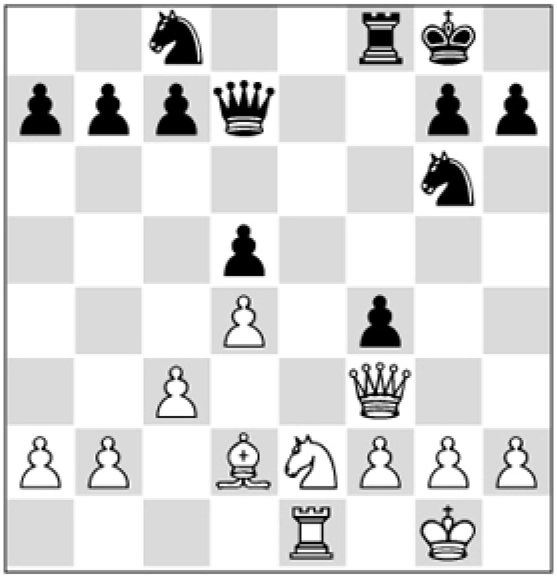
This combined retreat of the conjoined knights has as its ultimate goal the creation of asymmetry, for the knight on c8 is heading for e4 and Black’s formation suddenly takes on the character of the variation with …♘f6 against ♘e2.

This not-unoriginal retreat was, incidentally, tried by the author against Spielmann at Copenhagen 1923. That game saw …♘fg8, …♘ce7, then …♘g8-f6-e4.

15.♘f4 ♗xf4 16.♗xf4 ♗xd3 17.♕xd3 ♘g6 18.♕f3

On 18.♗d2, 18…♘d6 would follow, but even after the text move Black gets some play.

18…f5 19.♗d2 ♖xe1 20.♖xe1 f4 21.♘e2



21…♛f5

Not bad also would be 21…♘h4; e.g., 22.♕h5 ♘xg2 23.♔xg2 f3+ 24.♔h1 fxe2 25.♖xe2, and now perhaps 25… ♘e7 and …♘f5, with play on the light squares.

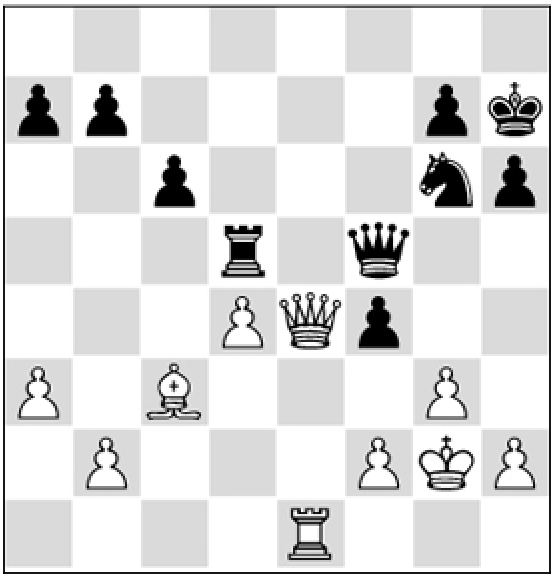
22.c4!

Deftly parried; White tries to punch a hole in the enemy ramparts.

22…♞b6

Not 22…♕e4 because of 23.♕xe4 dxe4 24.♘c3.

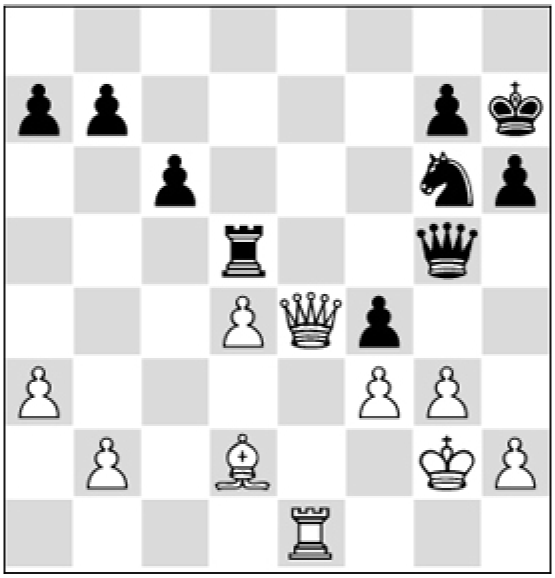
23.cxd5 ♞xd5 24.♞c3! ♞xc3 25.♝xc3 c6 26.♝b4 ♜d8 27.♛e4 ♛f7 28.a3 h6 29.g3 ♛f6 30.♝c3 ♜d5 31.♛e8+ ♚h7 32.♛e4 ♛f5 33.♚g2



33…♛g4

Black is not content with the ending after 33…♕xe4+ 34.♖xe4 fxg3 35.hxg3 ♔g8 36.♖e8+ ♔f7 37.♖a8 a6 38.♖b8 ♖d7 39.♔f3 ♘e7 40.♔e4 ♘d5, which does not strike him as sufficiently advantageous.

34.f3 ♛g5 35.♝d2



35…♛f6

Simpler in any case would be 35…♕d8; e.g., 36.♗xf4 ♖xd4 37.♕f5 ♕d7 38.♕c2 ♖d3, when the bishop cannot occupy the important diagonal c3-g7.

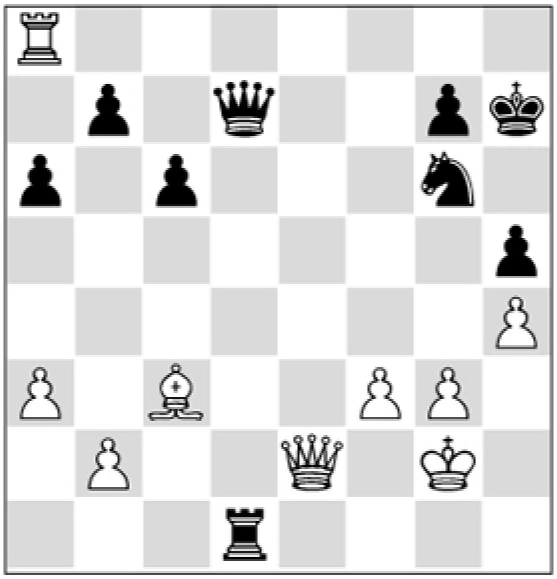
36.♗xf4 ♖xd4 37.♕c2 ♖d5?

Overlooking the reply; 37…♕d8 should have been played.

38.♗d2 ♕d8 39.♗c3

White now has an unconstrained, robust bishop and in consequence has the better game.

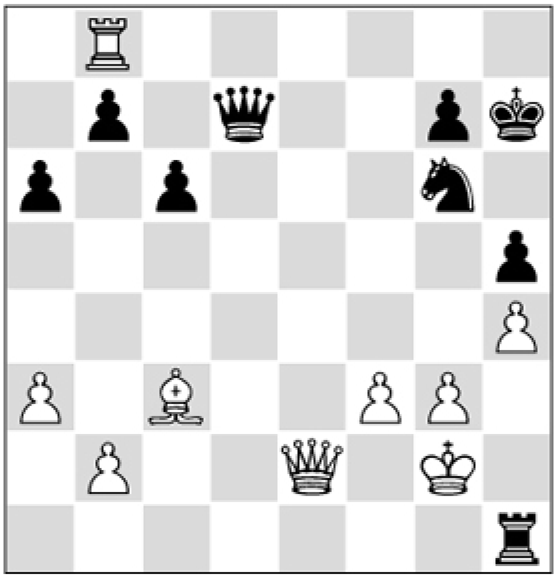
39…♖d3 40.♖e4 ♕d5 41.♕e2 ♕d7 42.h4 h5 43.♖e8 ♖d1 44.♖a8 a6



45.♖b8

To lure the pawns forward (46.♖xb7 is threatened), after which the queens are to be exchanged, giving a winning rook-plus-bishop ending. But Black finds a shrewd counter to this. Correct, by the way, was 45.♕e4; Black then, by means of 45…♕f7 and …♖d1-d5-f5, would try to keep his head above water. In that line, the defense would not have been easy.

45…♖h1!!



46.♚xh1

Marshall decided on this after using seventy (!) minutes of his time. Leading to a loss was 46.♕e8; e.g., 46…♘f4+ 47.gxf4 ♕h3+ 48.♔f2 ♖f1+ 49.♔e3 ♕xf3+ 50.♔d4 ♕d5+ 51.♔e3 ♖f3+ 52.♔e2 ♕d3+ 53.♔e1 ♖f1#. Unfavorable too would be 46.♕c4; e.g., 46…♘xh4+ 47.gxh4 ♕h3+ 48.♔f2 ♕h2+ and 49…♕xb8. So it would seem that taking the rook is forced, and the game, after its many vicissitudes, is drawn.

46…♛h3+ 47.♚h2

Draw

Not of course 47.♔g1? because of 47…♕xg3+ 48.♕g2 ♕xb8 49.♕g5 ♕f4 50.♕xh5+ ♕h6, with advantage to Black.

6. The bishop with and without an outpost

In playing over the three games that follow, my gracious reader will be struck by a definite impression, that the bishops in these encounters have a ‘neo-romantic orientation’ and cannot possibly be mistaken for the bishops of olden times. And yet we are speaking here of a difference that is just barely perceptible.

In Game 95, a bishop diagonal is handled according to the principles of lineal play. In this position: White – rook at d1, knight on c3, and a

pawn on e4; Black – pawns on c7 and d6 (we are following here the lines of thought found in *My System*, from which the scheme used here has been taken) we cannot say that our lineal play has as yet any clear objective for an attack, inasmuch as the penetration of the seventh rank cannot be seen as a real possibility in view of the enemy's firm defensive structure (c7, d6). But there followed **1.♘d5**, by which, with the knight at the forward outpost, the vague lineal effect took on a more realistic color. The sequel was **1…c6**, to drive off the disagreeable fellow; then **2.♘c3**, when the lineal play now had a clear object of attack at d6. The procedure outlined here, of *materialization* transferred to a diagonal – that is the theme of Game 95!
Incidentally, let us compare in Game 61 the move 28.♕f4 that we recommended. The queen at f4 is to be understood as a diagonal outpost.

In Game 96, the bishops boldly plunge into the attack, and in Game 97 into defense. All told, the 'barely perceptible' difference we spoke of before may be based on the fact that the modern generation of chess masters values a conceptual framework rather more highly than our forefathers did. Courage and fantasy also appear in a different (and better) aspect today (see the 'hanging bishops' in Game 96, and note further the 'courage of self-denial' shown by the bishop in Game 97.)

We now proceed to the games.

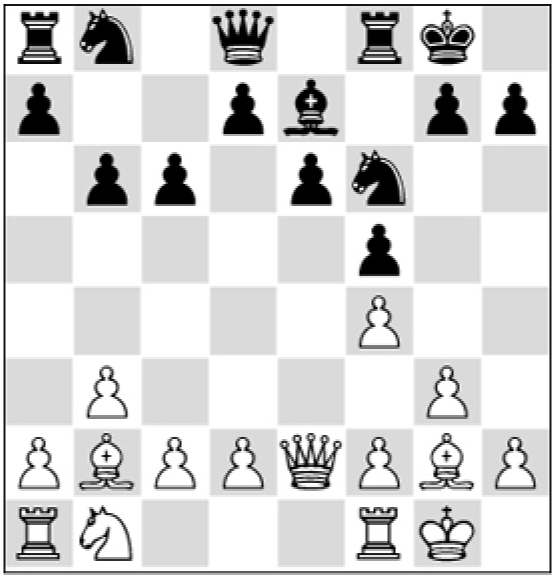
Game 95

Aron Nimzowitsch
Savielly Tartakower
Karlsbad 1923 (6)

1.♘f3 f5 2.b3 b6 3.♗b2 ♗b7 4.g3 ♗xf3

This exchange would appear to be unfavorable, for, as will soon be shown, Black's pawn formation has little mobility.

5.exf3 e6 6.f4 ♘f6 7.♗g2 c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 0-0



The white bishops are very strongly posted, but for now they exert no direct effect on the game.

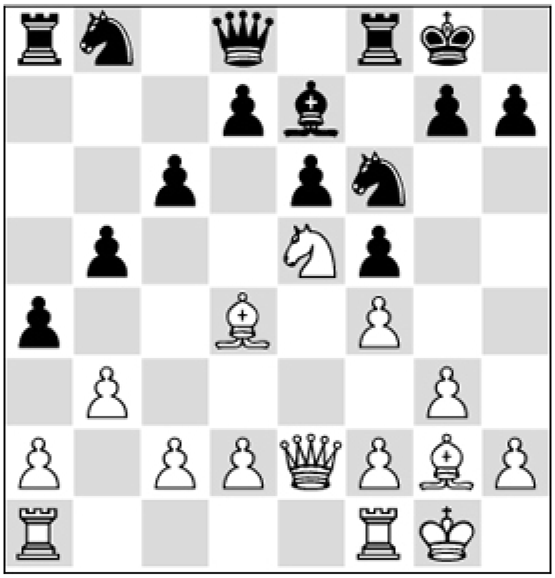
10.♘a3!

This knight places itself in the service of the bishops; in what follows the knight will not only reconnoiter the terrain but also lure Black’s pawns forward. Its most important function, however, becomes clear only at the 13th move.

10…a5

The knight at b8 cannot be developed in any other way; 10…b5 would fail to 11.♘xb5.

11.♘c4 a4 12.♗d4! b5 13.♘e5

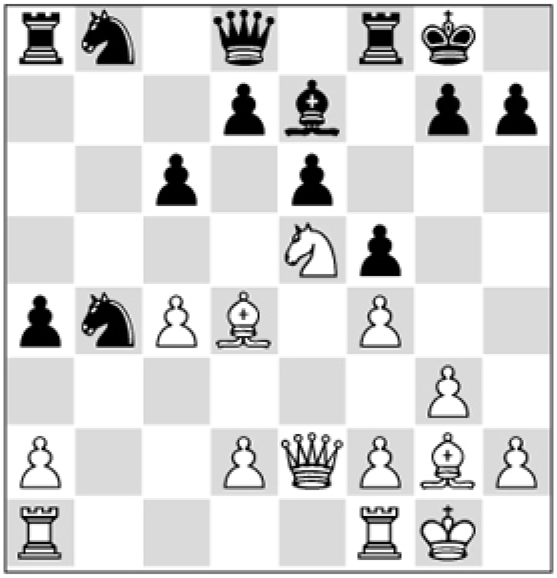


If, in the course of play, I had seen this knight as a lineal outpost (that is, an outpost on the e-file), I would have had no reason to publish the game in this section of the book. But the fact is, I considered this knight nothing more than a diagonal outpost: a vague, heretofore unspecified diagonal effect, thanks to the forward posting of the knight, assumes definite form and gains clear objects of attack. In other words, the diagonal effect has now become *materialized*.

13…♘d5

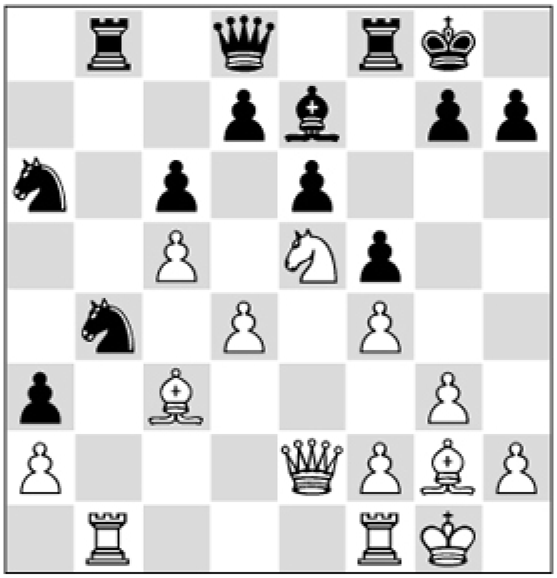
On 13…♘a6 the game would proceed not with sacrifices at c6 but with quiet development by ♖fe1 followed by c2-c4.

14.c4 bxc4 15.bxc4 ♘b4



In the understandable desire to take advantage of the very temporary central position (♘d5) according to the motto, ‘by way of the center into a hostile land’. But the campaign turns out to be disastrous. After passive play (15…♘c7), however, an eventual breakthrough on d5 (d2-d4-d5) would have decided the game.

16.♗c3 a3 17.d4 ♘8a6 18.♖ab1 ♖b8 19.c5!



Normally, 19.d5 would be the course to pursue, but the unfortunate position of the knight is so much easier to exploit.

19…♗f6 20.♖b3 ♗xe5 21.fxe5 ♕a5

The only way to protect the a-pawn.

22.♖fb1 ♜b7 23.♕d2 ♜fb8 24.♗f1 ♛c7

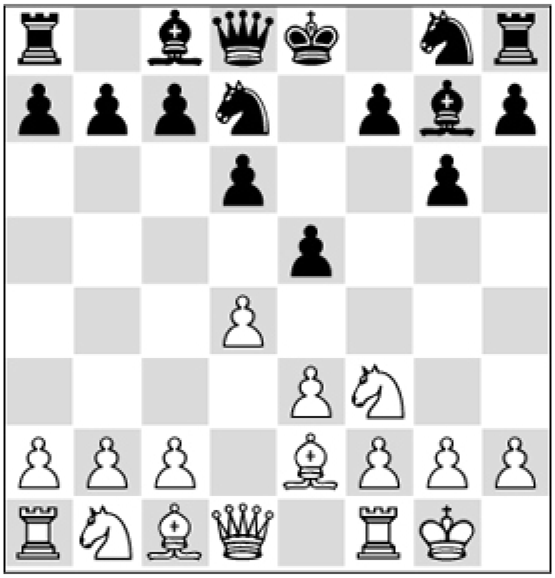
There was no way to save the game.

25.♗xb4 ♞xb4 26.♖xb4 ♛a5 27.♖xb7 ♛xd2 28.♖xb8+ ♚f7 29.♗c4 ♛xd4 30.♗b3 ♛xc5 31.♖b7 ♛xe5 32.♖xd7+ ♚f6 33.♖bd1 c5 34.♖7d6 ♛c3 35.♖xe6+ ♚g5 36.♖e3 ♛b4 37.♖c1 f4 38.♖e5+ ♚h6 39.♖exc5 fxg3 40.hxg3 g6 41.♖1c4 ♛e1+ 42.♔g2 g5 43.♖c6+ ♚g7 44.♖c7+ ♚f6 45.♖4c6+ ♚f5 46.♖f7+ ♚g4 47.f3+ ♚h5 48.♖xh7#

Game 96

O.T.Dalseg and K.Geelmuyden
Aron Nimzowitsch
Simultaneous consultation game, Oslo 1922

1.e3 g6 2.d4 ♝g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♗e2 ♞d7 5.0-0 e5



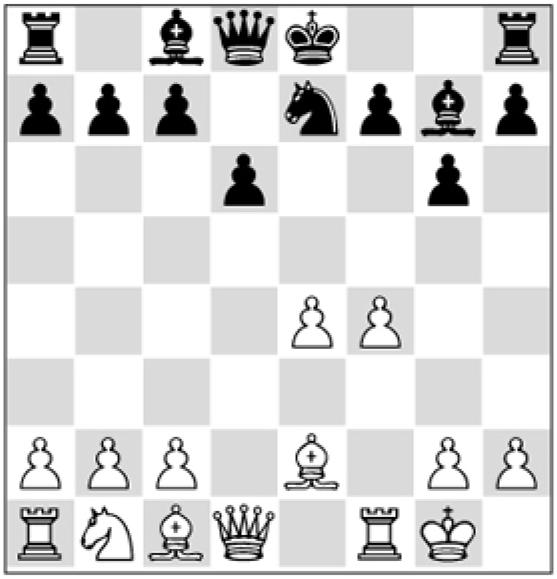
6.dxe5

This sudden transition to an open game comes as a surprise; one would rather have contemplated a closed method of development with c2-c4, ♘c3, and b2-b3. On 6.c4, Black would hardly have reached for Chigorin’s method 6…f5, which would only have weakened his position unnecessarily after the resource …e5xd4. Rather, he would have played 6…♘gf6; e.g., 7.♘c3 0-0 8.b3, and now perhaps 8…exd4 9.exd4 d5 10.c5 ♘e4! 11.♘xd5 ♘dxc5, etc.

6…♞xe5

The bishop at g7 begins to show signs of life. After 6…dxe5 7.e4 ♘gf6 8.♗c4! 0-0 9.♕e2 Black would have reached a 'Hanham' with two extra moves – thanks to White's e2-e3-e4 and ♗f1-e2-c4 – but it is open to dispute whether the fianchetto of the bishop is really the profitable way to benefit from these tempi. The diagonal a3-f8, in particular, could become a bit weak, for instance, after 9…c6 10.a4 ♕c7 11.b3 ♘b6 12.♗a3 ♖e8 13.♘bd2.

7.♞xe5 ♝xe5 8.f4 ♝g7 9.e4 ♞e7



10.c3

The attempt 10.f5, in the event the acceptance of the sacrifice (10…gxf5 11.exf5 ♗xf5 12.♗g5 ♗xb2 13.♖xf5 ♗xa1) proves too dangerous, can also be repelled in a calm and quiet way with (10.f5) 10…gxf5 11.exf5 ♗f6 12.♘c3 d5, followed by …c7-c6, …♗d7, …♕c7, or …b7-b6 and …0-0-0.

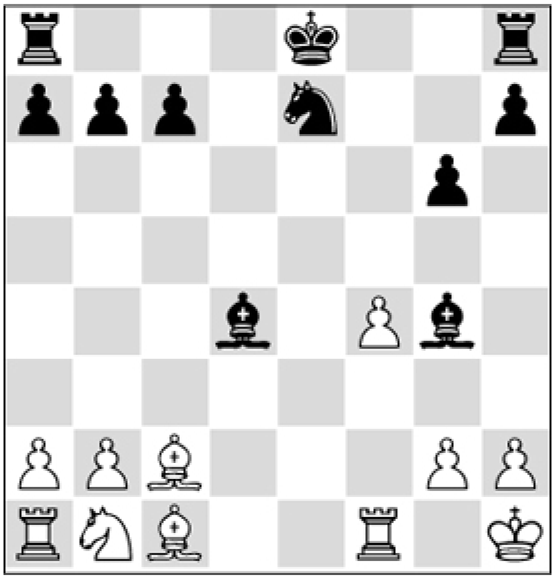
10…f5 11.♝d3

Black is clearly planning the liquidation …fxe4, then …d6-d5. But this expansion could result in the weakening of a few central squares; for example, e5. Hence 11.♘d2 might have been preferable. The reconnoitering action by the knight cannot in fact be undertaken early enough. A plausible line might be as follows: (11.♘d2) 11…0-0 12.♗c4+ ♔h8 13.♗b3! fxe4 14.♘xe4 d5 15.♘g5 h6 16.♘f3 and White controls the center of the board.

11…fxe4 12.♝xe4 d5 13.♝c2 d4!

With this and his next few moves Black seeks to counteract his opponent’s attempts at consolidation, indicated in the previous note. Decidedly weaker at this point, by the way, would be the conceptually poor 13…♗f5.

14.cxd4 ♛xd4+ 15.♛xd4 ♝xd4+ 16.♚h1 ♝g4!



This move incorporates several points. First, White’s feared maneuver ♘d2-f3 is to be debilitated by …♗xf3; second, after 17.♖e1 the reply 17…♔d7 should be possible without White being able to counter with 18.♖d1; and third, if 17.h3, the bishop is to remain at g4 with the utmost obstinacy.

17.♜e1

If 17.h3, then 17…h5 (much weaker would be 17…♗f5; e.g., 18.♗a4+ c6 19.♘d2! 0-0-0 20.♘f3, when White would not be without his own chances to consolidate) 18.♔h2 ♘f5!. If now 19.♗xf5, then 19…♗xf5 and Black has the advantage of the two bishops; but in the case of 19.g3 – to win the bishop – then 19…h4! and Black wins; e.g., 20.hxg4 hxg3+ 21.♔g2 ♖h2+ 22.♔f3 ♖xc2 23.♘a3 (or 23.gxf5 g2

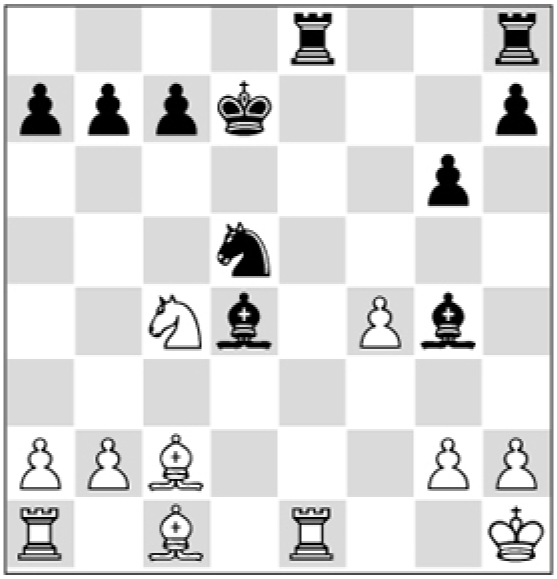
24.♖e1+ ♔f7 25.♗e3? ♗xe3 26.♔xe3 ♖e8+) 23…♖f2+ 24.♖xf2 gxf2 25.♗d2 ♗xb2 and Black has a material advantage. Or 17.h3 h5 18.♔h2 ♘f5 19.g3 h4! 20.♗a4+ (to bring the bishop to safety) 20…♔f7 21.hxg4 hxg3+ 22.♔g2 ♖h2+ 23.♔f3 g2 24.♖d1 ♖ah8 25.gxf5 gxf5! and White is defenseless against the threat 26…♖8h3+ 27.♔e2 g1♕#.

It is evident that White would also be inferior in the case of 17.♘d2 (instead of 17.h3) after 17…0-0-0 18.♘f3 ♗xf3 19.♖xf3 ♖he8 20.♖b1 ♘f5; we will merely point out the variation 21.♗xf5+ gxf5 22.♗d2 ♗xb2! 23.♖xb2 ♖xd2 and wins.

17…♚d7!

The king bravely advances. The fact that in the process he is supported by bishops that are as it were suspended in the air cannot but help remind us of the most daring acrobatic feats (we mean of course the human pyramid).

18.♞d2 ♜ae8 19.♞c4 ♞d5



20.♝d2?

A much stronger resistance would have been possible with 20.♘e5+ (this opportunity to consolidate is a recurrent theme throughout the game). It is true that Black would still have the somewhat better play; e.g., 20…♔c8 21.♖b1 ♗f5! 22.♗xf5+ gxf5 23.♗d2 ♗xe5 24.fxe5 ♔d7 and 25…♔e6, when Black has the better ending all the same.

20…♝e2

Winning a pawn. The game should now wind up to Black’s advantage fairly smoothly.

21.♝b3 ♝xc4 22.♝xc4 ♞b6 23.♝b3 ♝xb2 24.♜ad1 ♜xe1+?

A mistake that lets in the opposing bishops. After 24…♔c8 White would have no compensation of any kind for the lost pawn.

25.♝xe1+ ♚c8 26.♝e6+ ♚b8 27.♝h4

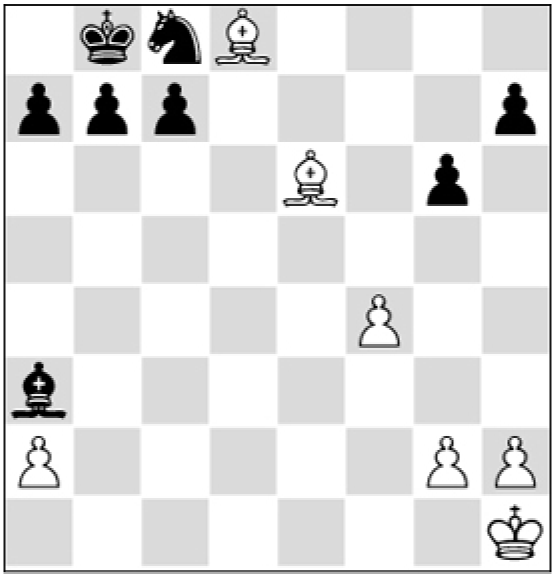
Black’s situation now looks critical: it is difficult to find an adequate reply to the threatened rook exchange (27.♖d8+) followed by a pawn-hunt (♗g8, etc.).

27…♞c8

27…c5, too, probably would have been good enough to draw; e.g., 28.♖d8+ ♖xd8 29.♗xd8 c4 30.♗xb6 axb6 31.♗xc4 ♗c1 32.g3 g5 33.f5 ♔c7 34.♔g2 ♔d6 35.♔f3 (35.f6 ♔e5 36.f7 ♗a3 37.♔f3 h5) 35…♔e5 36.♔g4 ♔f6 37.♔h5 ♔g7.

28.♜d8 ♜xd8 29.♝xd8 ♝a3!

Black had relied on this counter.



30.g4?

This loses. Dubious also, to be sure, is 30.♗g8 because of 30…♗e7 (30…h5? 31.♗f6! ♗e7 32.♗e5 h4 33.♗h7! g5 34.f5 ♘d6 35.f6 ♗f8 36.g3! hxg3 37.hxg3 c5 38.♔g2 b5 39.♔f3, threatening 40.♔g4)

31.♗xe7 ♘xe7 32.♗xh7 ♔c8 33.g4 ♔d7 34.h4 b5 (*not* 34…♔e6 because of 35.♗xg6) 35.h5 gxh5 36.gxh5 ♔e6 37.h6 ♔f6 38.♔g2 c5 39.♔f3 a5 40.♔e4 a4 and White would not be out of danger.

By contrast, 30.♗f6! seems to equalize outright; e.g., 30…♗e7 31.g4 and 32.♔g2, with the threat ♗xe7, g4-g5, and ♗g8. Or 30…♗e7 31.♗g7 ♗d6 32.f5 gxf5 33.♗xf5 h5 34.h4, etc. The premature exchange of rooks (24…♖xe1+) appears therefore to have spoiled Black’s chances of winning.

30…♗e7

The winning move. There followed:

31.♗xc8 ♗xd8 32.♗e6 g5 33.f5 b5

White is without hope despite the opposite-coloured bishops.

34.♔g2 c5 35.♔f3 ♔c7 36.♔e4 ♔d6 37.♗b3 c4 38.♗c2 ♗f6 39.♗d1 a5 40.♗c2 a4 41.♗d1 a3

0-1

Game 97

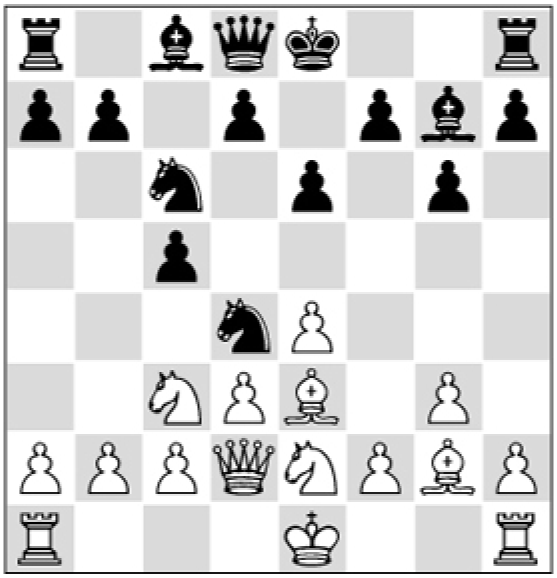
Gösta Stoltz
Aron Nimzowitsch
Berlin 1928 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.♘ge2 e6

In order to support the diagonal outpost, to be established at d4, by the second knight on c6.

6.d3 ♘ge7 7.♗e3 ♘d4 8.♕d2 ♘ec6

Cf. the previous note.



9.♘d1

In our game at Niendorf, Kostic chose 9.0-0; there followed 9…d6 10.♘d1 ♕a5! 11.♘xd4 ♕xd2 12.♗xd2 cxd4 13.c3 (the immediate 13.c4 is clearer) 13…♗d7 14.f4 dxc3 15.bxc3 ♖c8, with some diagonal play.

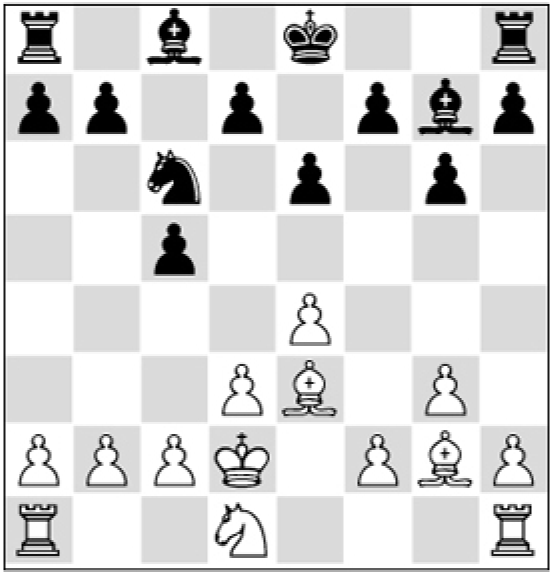
9…♘xe2

There is nothing to object to in the direct 9…d5; e.g.; 10.♘xd4 cxd4, with overt pressure down the c-file and latent pressure along the diagonal g7-b2. After c2-c3, which cannot be avoided for long, this pressure would make itself felt.

10.♕xe2 ♕a5+ 11.♕d2

If 11.c3, 11…♘d4 12.♕d2? ♘b3.

11…♕xd2+ 12.♔xd2



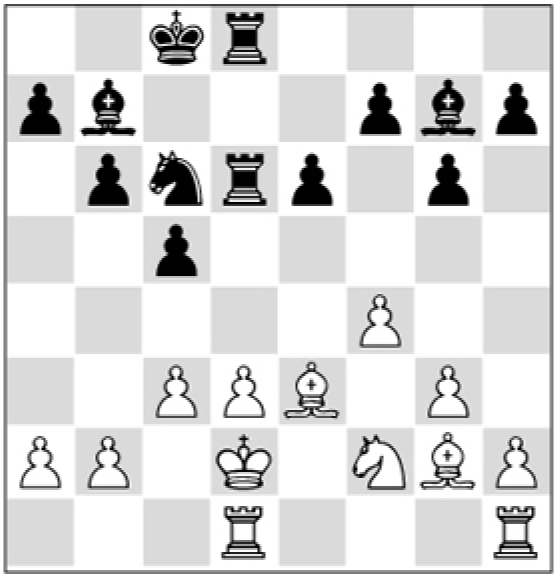
12…d6

An as yet indefinite diagonal action has to be handled with the greatest care, or it will come to nothing. The move 12…b6! would have created chances for Black; e.g., 13.c3 ♗b7 14.f4 d5 15.exd5 ♘e7 16.♘f2, and now perhaps 16…♘f5. It was germane to the position to reserve the possibility of the pawn formation after …exd5. After the text move Black's possibilities are reduced unnecessarily and a win can no longer be demonstrated.

13.f4 b6 14.e5 ♗b7 15.exd6 0-0-0 16.c3! ♖xd6 17.♘f2 ♖hd8

Black's position, though firm enough, offers all too little choice as to attacking formations.

18.♖ad1



A drawish position, for d3 is unconquerable. Steinitz could do no better than draw a number of similar positions despite the most dogged persistence on his part. Consider, for instance: 18…♘e7 19.♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20.♔c2 ♘f5 21.♖he1 h5 22.♘e4 ♖6d7 23.♗c1. Or 20…♘d5 21.♖he1 f5 22.♗c1, when Black transfers his king to f7 (to secure e6), but White deploys his rooks on the e-file and can face the coming enemy attack with equanimity.

18…e5

An ‘energetic’ attempt, which, however, my youthful opponent parries with little trouble.

19.♜he1 f5 20.♝xc6! ♜xc6

If 20…♗xc6, then 21.fxe5 ♗xe5 22.♗xc5.

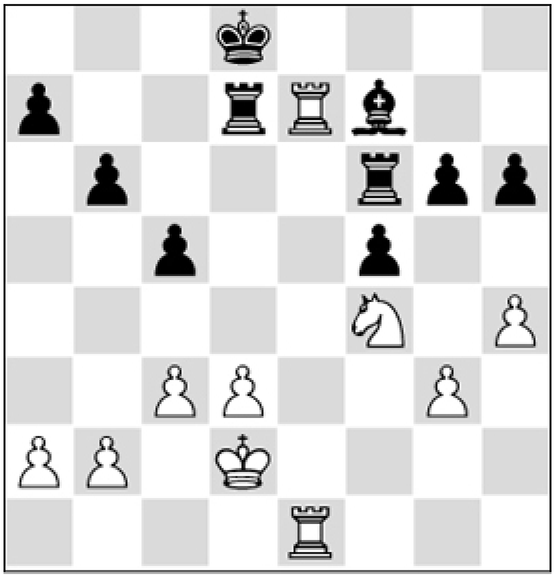
21.fxe5 ♝xe5 22.♝g5 ♝f6 23.♝xf6 ♜xf6 24.♜e7

Now White has gained an initiative that is not to be under-rated.

24…♜d7 25.♜de1 ♝d5!

Black does not shy from assigning his proud bishop to a defensive position (on f7). This sort of courage, quite foreign to pseudo-classical chess, would seem to be typical of the neo-romantic style.

26.♞h3 h6 27.♞f4 ♝f7! 28.h4 ♚d8



29.♜xd7+

The retreat 29.♖7e5 would lead to a liquidation after 29…g5 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♘h3 f4 32.♖xg5 (32.g4 ♗g6 33.♘f2 ♗xd3 34.♘xd3 c4) 32…fxg3 33.♖xg3 ♗xa2. After the text move, however, White finds himself at a disadvantage.

29…♚xd7 30.a3 g5 31.hxg5 hxg5 32.♞h3 ♜g6 33.♜e5 ♝e6

The bishop now constitutes, *inter alia*, a ‘bridge’ for the intended …♔d7-e7-f6.

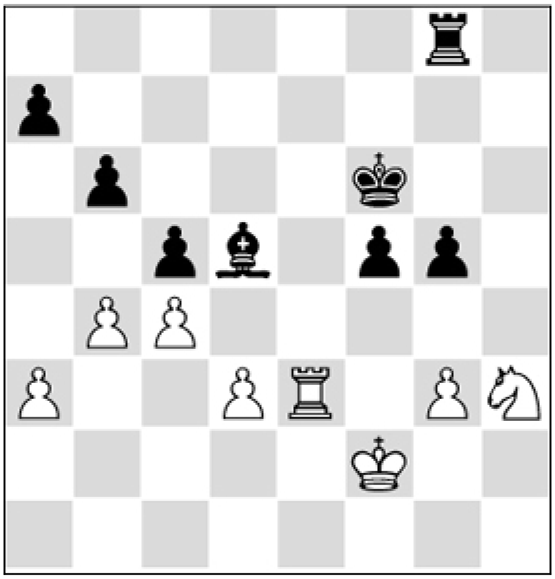
34.♚e1

With 34.d4 the bridge could be made ineffectual, but the continuation would be 34…cxd4 35.cxd4 f4 36.♖xg5 ♖xg5 37.♘xg5 fxg3, when White would have to cope with the ‘distant passed pawn’.

34…♚e7 35.b4 ♚f6 36.♜e3 ♜g8 37.♚f2 ♝d5

The bishop now emerges from its auxiliary position.

38.c4



38…♝f7

Here the simple 38…♗b7 should deserve preference. If 39.♔g1 ♖h8 40.♘f2, 40…f4 would not be bad; e.g., 41.gxf4 gxf4 42.♖e2 ♖g8+ 43.♔f1 ♗g2+ 44.♔e1 ♗f3 45.♖c2 ♖g1+, with advantage. Or 42.♖e1 ♖g8+ 43.♔f1 ♗g2+ 44.♔e2 (44.♔g1 would not exactly be delightful) 44…♖e8+ 45.♔d2 ♖xe1 46.♔xe1 ♔e5 47.♔d2 ♔d4 48.bxc5 bxc5 49.♔e2 f3+ 50.♔d2 ♗f1 and wins.

Other defensive formations would be even less favorable; e.g., (38…♗b7) 39.♘g1 ♖h8 40.♘f3 ♗xf3 41.♔xf3 ♖h2 and wins (42.♖e2 ♖xe2 43.♔xe2 ♔e5, etc.).

39.♞g1 ♜h8 40.♞f3 ♜h1 41.♞e5!

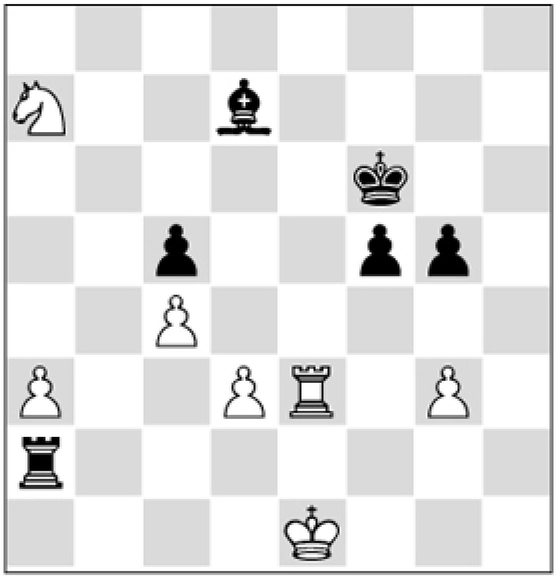
Better than 41.♖e1 ♖xe1, etc.

41…♝e6 42.♞c6

Now White should no longer lose.

42…♜h2+ 43.♚e1 ♜a2 44.bxc5 bxc5 45.♞xa7 ♝d7

A last attempt.



46.d4

White could draw with 46.♘b5; e.g., 46…♗xb5 47.cxb5 ♖xa3 48.♖e8 (the simplest!) 48…♖xd3 (if 48…♖b3, 50.♖b8!) 49.b6 ♖b3 50.♖b8! ♔e5 51.b7 ♔d6 52.♖d8+ ♔c7 53.♖c8+ ♔xb7 54.♖xc5 ♖f3 55.g4, etc.

46…cxd4 47.♜d3 ♚e5 48.♞b5 ♝xb5 49.cxb5 ♜b2!

Initiating an interesting breakthrough.

50.a4 g4 51.♜d2

Only 51.a5! ♖xb5 52.♖a3 would have left open some drawing chances.

51…♜xd2 52.♚xd2 f4! 53.gxf4+ ♚d6!

White is lost. The last few spasms:

54.a5 g3 55.a6 ♚c7 56.♚e2 d3+ 57.♚xd3 g2 58.♚e4 g1♛ 59.♚f5 ♛b6 60.♚g5 ♚d7 61.f5 ♚e7

0-1

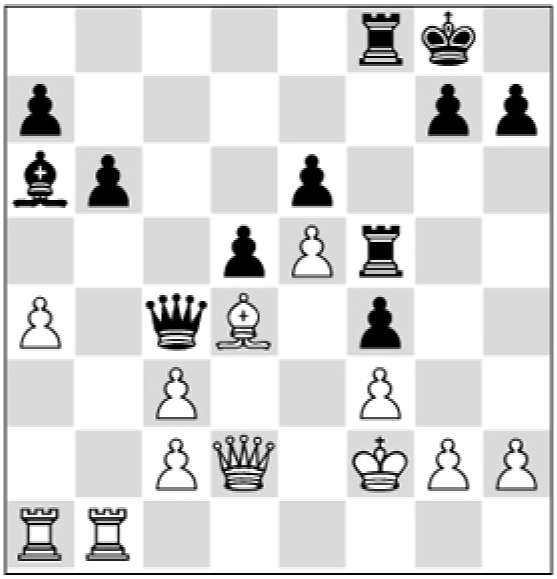
7. The weak square complex of a certain color

An illustration typical of the modern master game: one of the players labors under a number of weaknesses, all of which are on squares of *a certain* color. The process of centralization (Game 23), as well as that of restraint, tends to be carried out with surprising regularity on squares of a certain color. Matters are not much different in the realm of alternating maneuvers (cf. Part V): the obligatory ‘two weaknesses’ in this case, too, are either ‘light’ or ‘dark’ and are almost never ‘mixed’ (cf., e.g., Game 71). We may come across an exceptional case such as the following: the defender of a file that is under the control of his opponent (for example, the e-file) has to keep watch over two squares, say, e6 and e7 (cf. Game 93). Here we are concerned with a weak complex of squares of *mixed* color.

In which direction should the defending side turn? (For the ‘attacker’ we have already given the guidelines in Part V.) There are three possibilities:

1) One can try to initiate counterplay on squares of the opposite color. One such instance of this strategy (see Game 98) would appeal only to the pure attacking player; the positional player, in contrast, will not feel altogether at home in such a situation. For the type of position in which one player has become entrenched on the ‘light’ squares while his opponent has occupied all the ‘dark’ squares – such a position all too clearly lacks a trend toward a successive clarification. In such a game the principal element of clarification, the exchange, given the nature of the position, only seldom comes into question. (Cf. the note to the 9th move of Game 98.)

2) One can try to play to recapture the terrain that has been lost, a sound strategy we would like to illustrate here with an example (Maroczy-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1923):



Play went as follows:

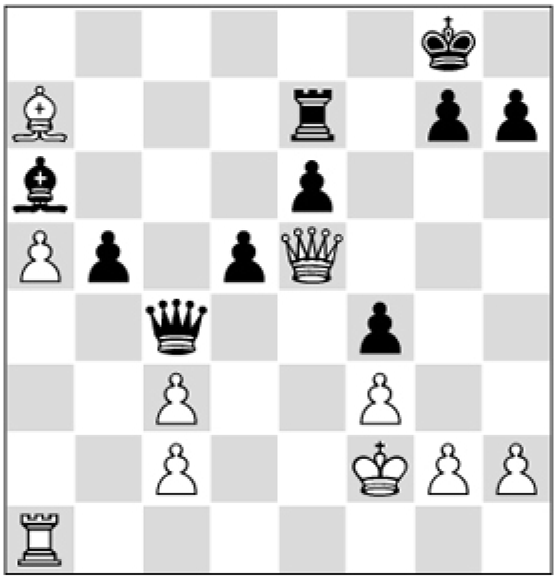
23.a5 b5 24.♝xa7 ♜xe5 25.♜e1

White now looks to take control of the dark squares in the center.

25…♜xe1! 26.♛xe1 ♜e8 27.♛e5

Apparently attaining his objective.

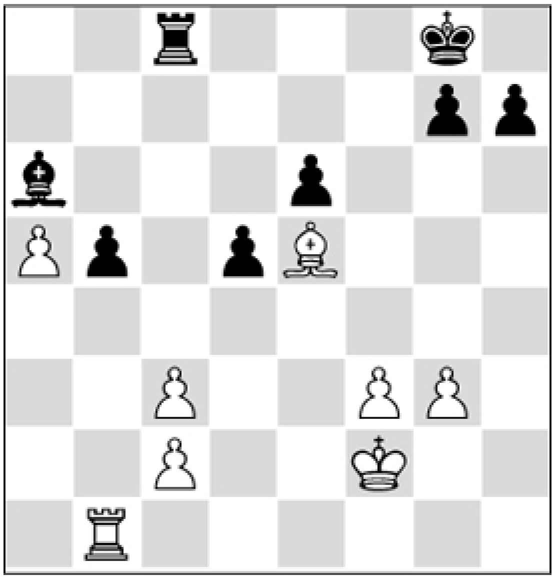
27…♜e7!



28.♝d4

28.♗b6 would of course have been better, preventing 28…♕c7; but after 28…b4 29.cxb4 ♕xb4 30.♔g1 Black would play 30…h6 and …♔h7 and would not stand badly.

28…♛c7 29.♜e1 ♛xe5 30.♝xe5 ♜f7 31.g3 fxg3+ 32.hxg3 ♜f8 33.♜b1 ♜c8



The possession of the central square e5 is not exactly of supreme importance.

34.♖b4 g5 35.♔e3 ♔f7 36.g4 ♔g6 37.♖b1 h5 ½-½

3) Finally, in order that the opponent not become all too powerful on the squares of a certain color, one can try to implement preventive measures; cf. the move we recommend, the 12th, in Game 99. It should be clear that we are disposed to give preference to this last-mentioned method of play.

Game 98

Aron Nimzowitsch
Jacques Mieses
Hannover 1926 (6)

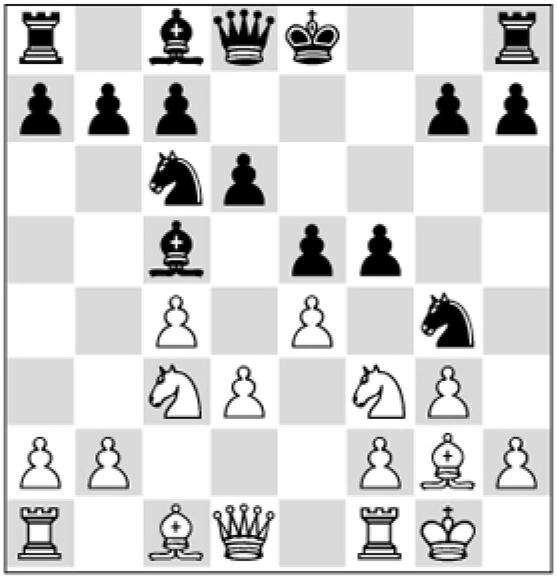
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4

My special Dresden Variation (cf. Games 31 and 52).

4…♗b4 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♗c5 7.♗g2

The preventive 7.h3 came into consideration.

7…♘g4 8.0-0 f5



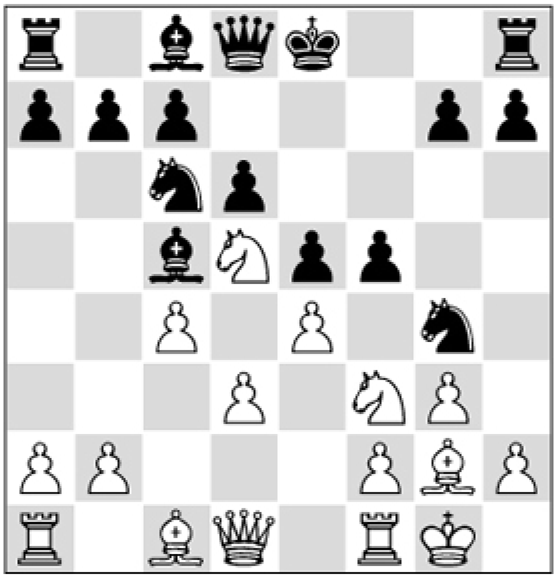
With this move a position is reached that is difficult to assess. The second player looks strong on the dark squares (e.g., f2 and d4), but White appears able to create counterplay on the light squares.

9.♘d5

Instead of the text move, the following two lines of play can be considered:

I. 9.exf5 ♗xf5 10.♘g5 ♕d7 11.♗d5 ♖f8 12.♘ge4 ♗b6, when Black stands better;

II. 9.♗g5 ♘f6 10.exf5 ♗xf5 11.♘h4 ♗e6 12.♘e4 0-0 13.♔h1; if 13…♕d7, then 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.f4 ♔h8 16.f5 ♗g8 17.♘xc5 dxc5 18.♗e4 ♘d4, with about equal chances. Note (after 18…♘d4) that the contrast between the light- and dark-square formations has been preserved unimpaired – one could almost say, all the way into the endgame (Cf. the introductory remarks to Chapter 7)!



9…h6?

This damages his own ‘dark-square’ initiative (for 9…h6 amounts to a loss of time) and at the same time facilitates his opponent’s plans on the light squares. More can hardly be asked of a *single* move!

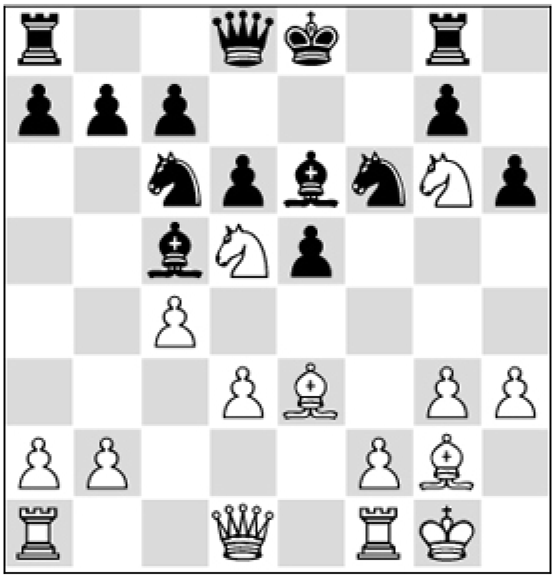
Instead of 9…h6?, 9…0-0 is all but obvious. After 10.♗g5 ♕e8! 11.♘xc7 ♕h5 12.♘xa8 is unsound (12…fxe4 13.dxe4 ♖xf3) and 12.h3 would lead to unpleasantness for White in view of 12…♘xf2 (13.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 14.♔xf2 fxe4 15.dxe4 ♕xg5 16.♘xa8 ♘xd4 17.♖c1 – Black threatened 17…♗xh3 – 17…♗xh3 18.♖c3 ♗g4 19.♘c7 ♕h5 20.♘b5 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 ♕h2+ 22.♔f1 ♕h1+ and wins). White would therefore have to forgo 10.♗g5. After 10.h3 (what else?), 10…♘xf2 11.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 12.♔xf2 fxe4 13.dxe4 ♘d4 14.♗e3 ♘xf3 15.♗xf3 ♗xh3 a nearly even position would be reached. The text move gets Black into difficulties.

10.exf5 ♝xf5 11.♞h4 ♝e6 12.♞g6 ♜g8 13.h3

In possession of all the ‘white’ points, he now sets about expelling his opponent from the ‘black’ points as well.

13…♞f6 14.♝e3!

Preparing b2-b4, which, if played at once, would have permitted the reply 14…♗d4.



14…♝xd5?

14…♗f7 would seem to be imperative. The player of the black pieces is defending himself against the separate threats, to be sure, but he is doing nothing to remediate in a comprehensive way the problems on the light squares.

It is interesting to observe, by the way, that 14…♕d7 (intending 15…♕f7) would not have sufficed; e.g., 15.b4 ♗xe3 16.fxe3 0-0-0 (not 16…♗xh3 because of 17.♖xf6) 17.♕a4 ♔b8 18.b5 ♗xd5 19.bxc6! ♗xc6 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.♖b1+ ♔a8 22.♘e7 and wins.

15.cxd5 ♘d4

Or 15…♘e7 16.♘xe7 and 17.d4, with advantage to White.

16.f4 ♛d7

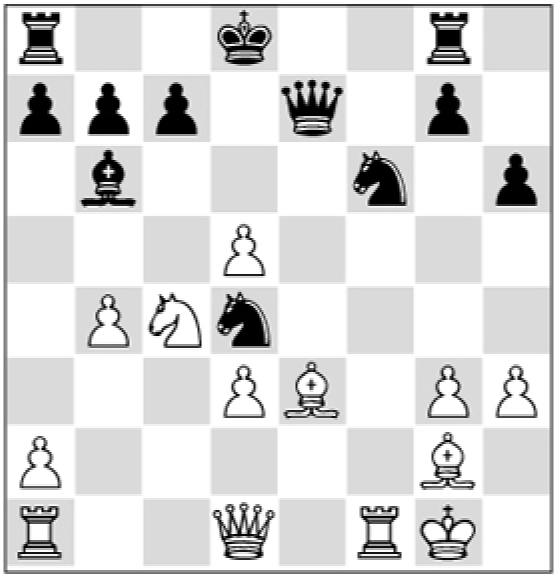
16…exf4 17.♖xf4 ♘e6 would be useless because of 18.♗xc5 ♘xf4 19.♕e1+ ♔f7 20.♘xf4 ♖e8 21.♘e6, when White keeps the extra material.

17.b4 ♝b6 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.♘xe5 ♛e7 20.♘c4

Black is of course lost; all the more commendable is Mieses’ resourcefulness in keeping an eye out for a saving clause.

20…♚d8!

20…0-0-0 does not work because of 21.♘xb6+. Now, however, Black is planning 21…♖e8.

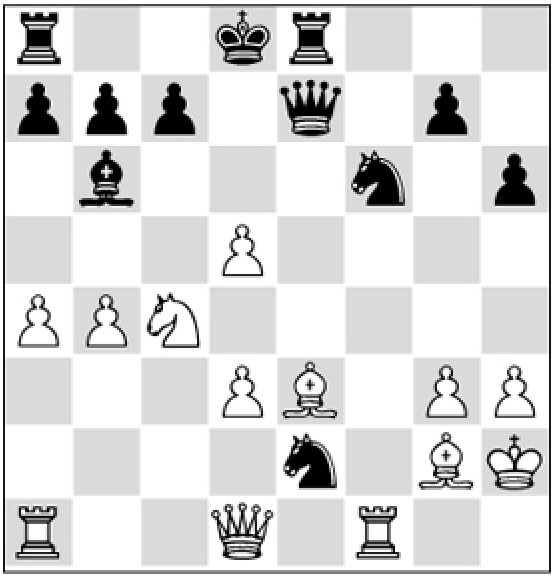


21.a4

Too bad. 21.♖e1 would have led to an elegant win, namely with 21…♕xb4 22.♖b1 ♕c3 23.♕a4 ♘c2 (the only move) 24.♗xb6! ♘xe1 25.♗xc7+ ♔xc7 26.♖xb7+! ♔xb7 27.d6+ ♘xg2 28.♕b5+ and mate in three moves.

21.d6 also would have won without difficulty; 21…cxd6 22.♖e1 ♕c7 23.a4 a6 24.♘xb6 ♕xb6 25.♕d2 ♖e8 26.♗f2. The text move also wins, of course.

21…♜e8 22.♚h2 ♞e2!



23.d6

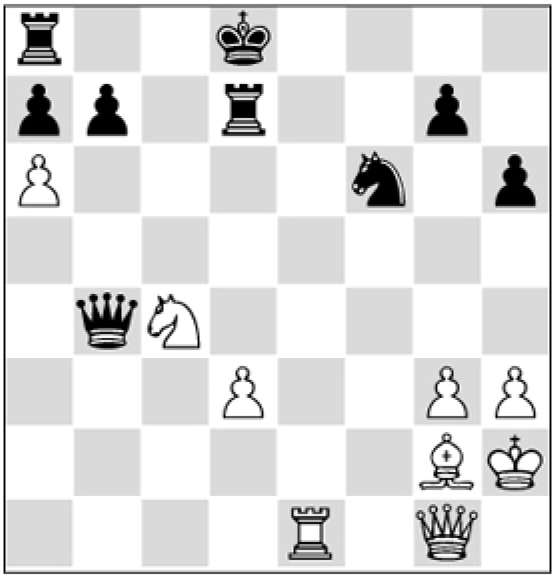
He lets himself be hoodwinked. Simply 23.♕xe2 ♗xe3 24.♕f3 would have won fairly easily.

23…cxd6 24.♖e1 ♗xe3 25.♖xe2 ♗g1+ 26.♕xg1 ♕xe2

Now White still has work to do.

27.♘xd6 ♖e7 28.a5 ♖d7 29.♖e1 ♕d2 30.♘c4 ♕xb4 31.a6

The attack must break through.



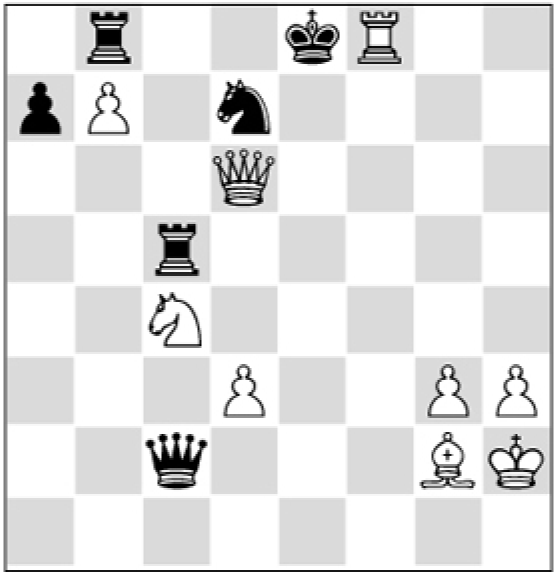
31…♖c8

On 31…b5 there follows 32.♘e5; e.g., 32…♖c8 33.♘xd7 ♘xd7 34.♖b1 ♕c5 35.♕xc5 ♖xc5 36.d4 ♖f5 37.♗c6. Or 31…♖b8 32.♘e5 (threatening 33.♕xa7; if played at once, this would have permitted 32…bxa6) 32…♕d4! (best) 33.♘f7+ ♔c7 34.♖c1+ ♔b6 35.♖b1+ ♔xa6 36.♕c1 ♕xd3 37.♗f1.

32.♖b1 ♕a4 33.axb7 ♖b8 34.♕c5 ♖c7 35.♕d4+ ♘d7

Or 35…♖d7 36.♕e5 ♖c7 37.♘a5, with the deadly threat 38.♘c6+ ♖xc6 39.♕xb8+.

36.♕xg7 ♖c5 37.♕h8+ ♔c7 38.♕xh6 ♕c2 39.♕d6+ ♔d8 40.♖f1 ♔e8 41.♖f8+



Black resigned, as there could follow 41…♘xf8 42.♕xb8+ ♔f7 43.♕xf8+! ♔xf8 44.b8♕+ ♔f7 45.♕xa7+ and 46.♕xc5.

The loss of the exchange put the game off the course of its logical development, certainly, but it could not affect the nerve center of the position, namely the attacking possibilities on the light squares.

Game 99

Andersen and Nielsen

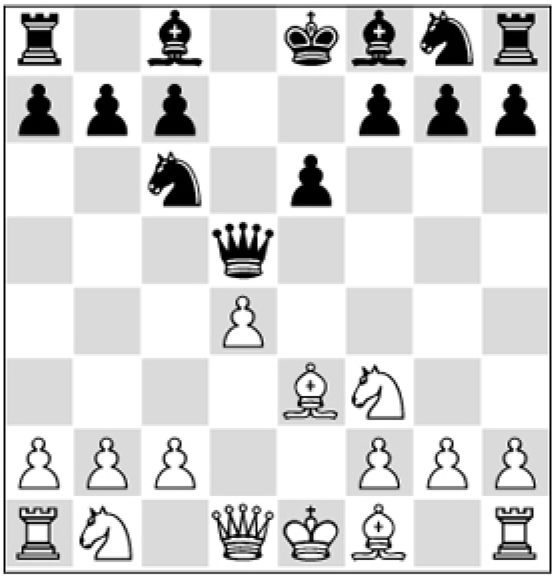
Aron Nimzowitsch

One of three simultaneous consultation games, Copenhagen 1923

1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.♗e3 e6

4…e5 is probably the objectively best move here.

5.♘f3



5…♝d7

To intimidate the opponents a little, for now Black ‘threatens’ to throw the d-file onto the scale.

Objectively speaking, 5…♘f6 should of course be the better move. For instance, 6.h3 (otherwise …♘g4 may follow) 6…e5 7.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘d5. Or 6…♕a5+ 7.c3 e5 8.b4 ♕d5 9.b5 exd4 10.cxd4 ♘e7! 11.♘c3 ♕d8! and 12…♘ed5 and Black has consolidated his position.

6.♞bd2

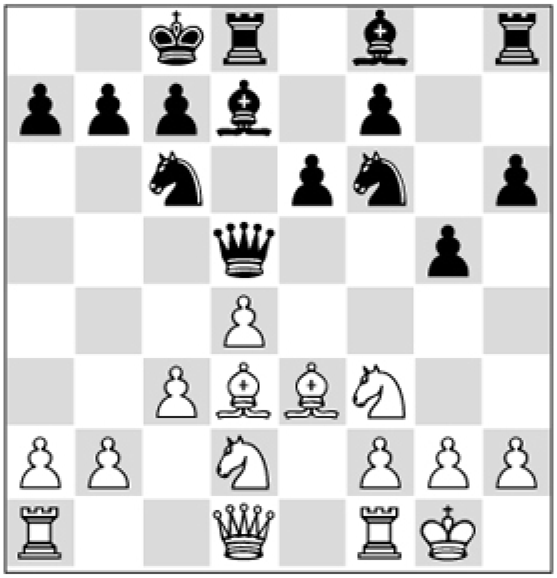
To be preferred was 6.♗e2; e.g., 6…0-0-0 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.c4 ♕f5 9.h3, when Black’s queen position gives cause for concern. But after 6.♗e2 0-0-0 7.0-0 the second player probably would have turned to the fantastical maneuver 7…f6 8.c4 ♕h5 9.♘c3 ♕f7, although even in that case his position would have been difficult to defend.

6…0-0-0 7.♝d3

Subtly conceived! With this move White renounces the obvious attacking line 7.♗c4 (followed by ♕e2 and 0-0-0) in order instead to leave the enemy queen unmolested. The presence of the queen on d5 does not look undesirable to him – in this case the …e6-e5 advance can always be beaten back by c2-c4 and d4-d5, with gain of time.

7…♞f6 8.0-0 h6 9.c3 g5

To keep the f3-knight from its route to e5 – and at the same time the development of the bishop at g7 is planned.



10.c4

This thrust is now at least as double-edged as before; the enemy queen finds her way to somewhat unusual squares, which, however, turn out to be not at all bad.

The logical course after Black’s 9th move lay rather in 10.b4. The sequel might be 10…g4 11.♘e1 ♕h5 12.b5 ♘e7 (not first 12…♗d6, as g2-g3 and c2-c4 would put this bishop under pressure) 13.c4 ♘f5 14.c5 ♘d5, with chances and counter-chances. After the maneuver in the text White falls behind surprisingly quickly.

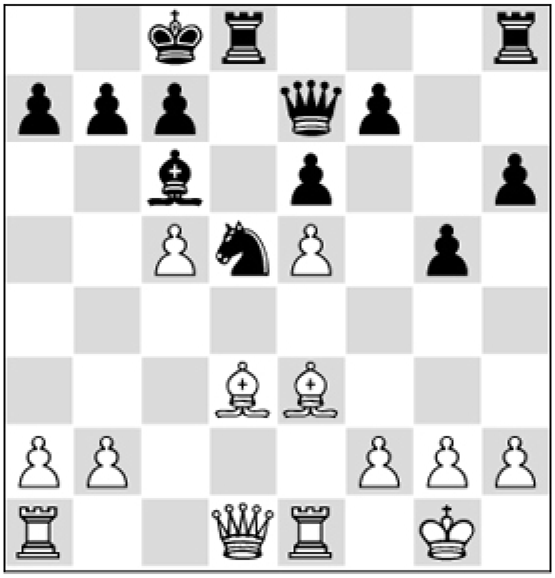
10…♛d6 11.c5 ♛e7 12.♞c4

Black is on the verge of conquering light-square terrain, so the first player’s resistance should have focussed on the light squares – hence 12.♗b5!.

12…♞d5 13.♞fe5

And here, preference should be given to the sacrifice 13.b4. After 13…♘cxb4 14.♖b1 White’s attack should not be underestimated, especially as it appears to go hand in hand with a ‘blockading’ strategy.

13…♝g7 14.♜e1 ♞xe5 15.♞xe5 ♝xe5 16.dxe5 ♝c6



Now, however, the first player’s game is a ‘white-square’ ruin. Note the naturalness by which the rest is carried out.

17.♕c1 ♘f4 18.♗f1 ♘d3 19.♗xd3 ♖xd3 20.b4 ♕d7 21.♕c4 ♖d8 22.a3 ♗a4 23.♖eb1 ♗b5 24.♕c2 ♕d5 25.♖e1 g4 26.♕e2 h5 27.a4 ♗c4 28.♕c2 h4 29.♕e2 ♖d4 30.♕b2 ♖d3 31.♕e2 ♖g8 32.♔h1 h3

This fresh light-square weakness on g2 worthily joins those on c6, d5, b5, d3, etc. This is the last straw.

33.♖g1 hxg2+ 34.♖xg2 ♖a3 35.♕e1 ♖xa1 36.♕xa1 ♕f3 37.♔g1 ♖d8

White resigned.

8. The triumph of ‘bizarre’ and ‘ugly’ moves

These were the most amiable epithets that the pseudo-classical masters used to give to our moves. Today, however, now that our ideas have won out all along the line, *everyone* finds it strange that such a natural, fine, and deep line of play as the Hanham Variation could be seen as ugly. After the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘d7!** Black intends, by means of …c7-c6, to place another pawn in the center, when after all he will obtain a certain central superiority. Compared with this, what does it matter that the bishop on c8 remains undeveloped for a time? But the pseudo-classicists had only one ideal: that of free, unhindered piece development.

But we do not wish to ‘square accounts’; the pseudo-classical, formalistic line of thought is dead – we cannot flog a dead horse. And if in the pages that follow we register a few value judgments from that time, it is not out of a desire to ‘square accounts’ but is done simply on technical grounds.

I. **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5** ‘The decisive mistake.’ This comment intimated, *inter alia*, that this ‘unmotivated’ advance – unmotivated because the knight was still at g8, so 3.e5 does not involve an attack – was ugly. In reality, however, 3.e5, as the author had emphasized for fully twenty years (no one would believe him), is neither a mistake nor ‘ugly’, but a good and reasonable move. After 3…c5 White has no fewer than four (sic!) good equalizing lines, namely 4.c3, 4.dxc5, 4.♘f3, and 4.♕g4!. Today, the correctness of 3.e5 is generally recognized.

II. **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝c4 ♞f6 4.♞g5** A duffer’s move! Today, everybody knows that 4.♘g5 embodies a logically indicated attempt to punish his opponent’s premature development of his knight (3…♘f6?).

III. **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♝b5 ♞f6 4.0-0 ♞xe4 5.d4 ♝e7 6.♛e2 ♞d6 7.♝xc6 bxc6!! 8.dxe5 ♞b7!** A magnificent strategic retreat! No, not a retreat, a fighting withdrawal! In retreating, Black inflicts two bloody wounds on his opponent: he robs him of one of his bishops and fashions for himself a compact pawn center of dynamic value. Truly most captivating play! The pseudo-classical cast of mind judged the matter differently. They saw neither the dynamism in the retreat nor its conceptual beauty – for them the whole thing was nothing more than a pathetic and abject… knight move.

We present two games. In Game 101 we find the ‘bishop at b5 in a closed game’, which deployment, according to Tarrasch, is ‘less forgivable in a master player than leaving a piece en prise’. But in fact, the move by the bishop to b5 appears to be very good and can well be played in seventy percent of all closed games without disadvantage – probably even with advantage. In Game 100 we find the prelude to a fianchetto (g2-g3), which then, however, ‘incomprehensibly’ fails to materialize. In its further course, too, the game comes across as partly ‘mysterious’ and partly disharmonious. And yet in fact it is one of the most logically thought-out games. The aesthetic sense in chess is grounded precisely in the realm of thought – that is the point. He who goes by outer appearances only can easily come to feel that moves are ugly, when such is by no means the case. In the final analysis, it is precisely in the realm of thought that beauty in chess is to be found.

Game 100

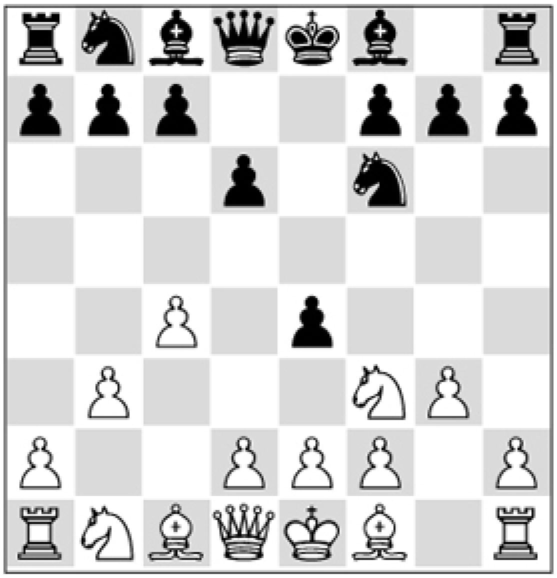
Aron Nimzowitsch
Alexander Alekhine
New York 1927 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.b3 d6 3.g3 e5 4.c4!

‘Bizarre!’ He is not afraid of …e5-e4. Anyone else would have chosen 4.d3.

4…e4

This move, weakening the *‘dark-square’ points*, is the reason for all Black’s future difficulties.



5.♘h4!

So the g2-square was not for a bishop in need of a fianchetto but for the ‘bizarre’ knight!

5…d5

This move, which would have been strong in the event of 5.♘d4?, merely leads in the present circumstances to an excursion by the queen, a sortie that is not entirely beyond reproach. But there was hardly anything better available to Black.

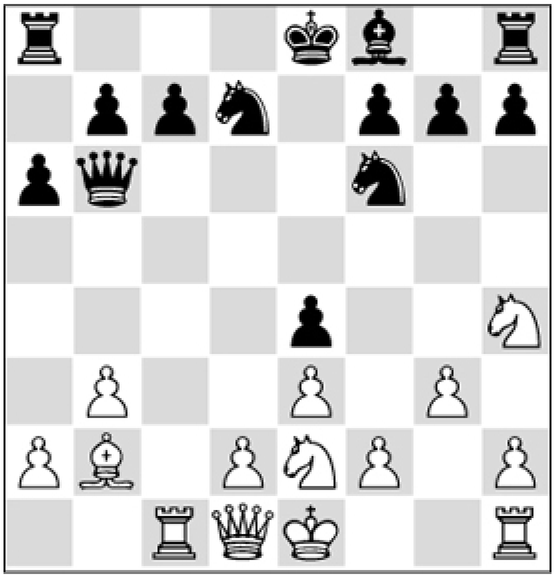
6.cxd5 ♛xd5 7.♞c3 ♛c6 8.e3

With this, the possibility of a fianchetto is renounced for good.

8…a6

More consistent was 8…♗g4, when White’s best reply would be 9.♕xg4! (because the ♘f6 will later lose a tempo when the knight is forced to withdraw) 9…♘xg4 10.♗b5 ♘f6 11.♗b2 a6 12.♗xc6+ ♘xc6 13.♘e2 ♘g4! 14.f3 (else …♘e5 follows) 14…exf3 15.♘xf3 0-0-0, with only a minimal advantage for White. This variation gives us insight into the defensive resources available to the second player: he clearly has a measure of counterplay on the light squares. If he plays his (not exactly numerous) trumps correctly, he has the chance of hemming in his opponent’s attack on the dark squares. The move chosen by Alekhine makes the defense more difficult, though to be sure without making it hopeless.

9.♝b2 ♝g4 10.♝e2 ♝xe2 11.♞xe2 ♞bd7 12.♜c1 ♛b6



13.0-0

Here 13.♕c2 was worth strong consideration; e.g., 13…♗d6 14.♘f5. But it appears that Black has better with 13…♘c5!. If now 14.♗d4, then 14…♘d3+ 15.♕xd3 exd3 16.♗xb6 cxb6 17.♘d4 (or 17.♘c3

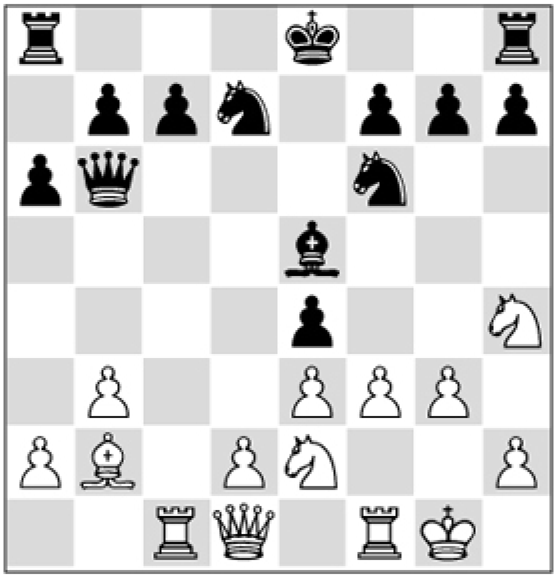
♗a3!, when the c-file is wrenched from White) 17…♗c5 18.♖c3? ♘d5 19.♖xd3 ♘b4 20.♖c3 ♗xd4 and 21…♘xa2, when Black stands better. Yet the variation beginning with 13.♕c2 ♘c5 looks favorable for White; only instead of 14.♗d4 he should choose 14.0-0; e.g., 14…♘d3 15.♗xf6! ♕xf6 (or 15…gxf6) 16.♘f4 (threatening ♘d5), with advantage to White.

On other moves (instead of 13…♘c5), too, we should prefer White’s game; e.g., (13.♕c2) 13…0-0-0 14.0-0 and Black is embarrassed for a plausible reply. The variations cited here give the impression that the omission on the part of Black at the 8th move can no longer be made good: 13.♕c2 would have maintained the pressure. But if that weren’t enough, even the inferior text move (13.0-0) should not have allowed Black to escape the pressure; the missed opportunity to initiate light-square counterplay should not be permitted to recur. For that reason we are quite dubious about Alekhine’s attempt over the next several moves to attempt a ‘coup d’etat’ on the light squares.

13…♗d6 14.f3

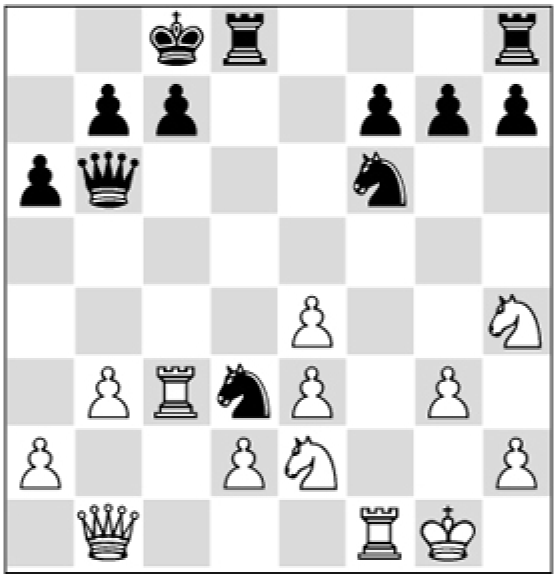
Alekhine prefers 14.d3.

14…♗e5



Very interesting! He wishes at any price to occupy the light squares (taking over d3). But what does the Logos of the position tell us? Well, it stands back and examines the matter with a skeptical eye: why should the light-square points suddenly prove able to put the dark-square points in the shade? After his omission on move eight Black’s dark-square weaknesses had become chronic. White has committed no mistake (for 13.0-0 cannot be so characterized), so his opponent’s violent attempt, despite all its ingenuity, must in some way be unsound.

15.♝xe5 ♞xe5 16.fxe4 ♞d3 17.♜c3 0-0-0 18.♛b1



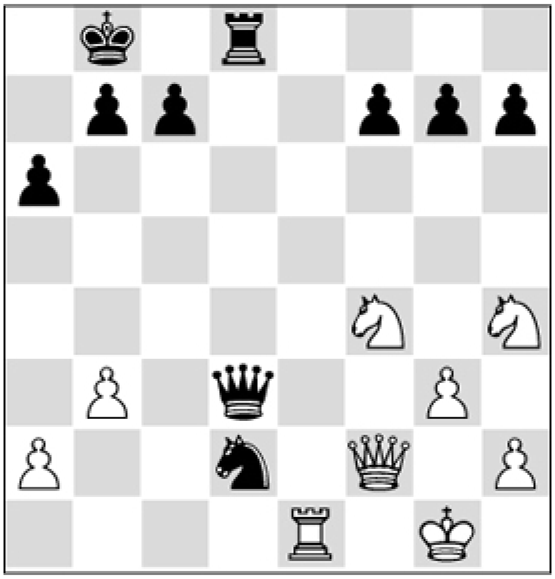
18…♞xe4

No ‘coup d’etat’ without a ‘sacrifice’! Whether 18…♘c5 would have been better seems doubtful after the further moves 19.d3 ♘a4 20.bxa4 ♕xe3+ 21.♖f2 (21.♔h1 ♕xe2 22.♖fc1 would also have been promising) 21…♘g4 22.♕f1.

19.♜xd3 ♞xd2 20.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 21.♛f5+ ♚b8 22.♜e1

22.♖c1 was worth considering.

22…♛xe3+ 23.♛f2 ♛d3 24.♞f4



24…♛c3?

With 24…♕c2 Black would have retained good drawing chances. But what follows from this fact, that the coup d’etat has perhaps proven to be sound? Or that ‘black’ and ‘white’ points can seize power *at will*? No, nothing of the sort. For, in the first place, the draw (after 24…♕c2!) is as yet unclear; secondly, it has yet to be shown that White could not have improved on his play at one point or another (e.g., on move 22); and thirdly, there are, regrettably, many positions in which a clearly demonstrable advantage is not sufficient to win. (Winning by attrition should count!)

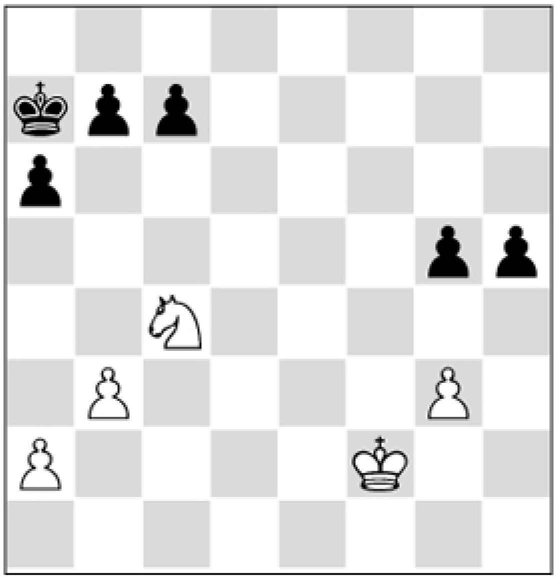
25.♜e3 ♛c1+

A bitter struggle now follows. White wins, but only after many hours of dogged struggle.

26.♚g2 ♛c6+ 27.♞f3 g5 28.♞d3 ♞xf3 29.♛xf3 ♛c2+ 30.♞f2 f5 31.♜e2 ♛c5 32.♞d3 ♛d4 33.♞e5 f4 34.♞c4

According to Spielmann, 34.g4 was a safe course, for White should then be able to work up a middlegame attack. But what if it *would* come down to an endgame? Could not the protected passed pawn become unpleasant?

34…fxg3 35.♜d2 ♛h8 36.♜xd8+ ♛xd8 37.hxg3 ♛d4 38.♛f8+ ♚a7 39.♛f2 ♛xf2+ 40.♚xf2 h5



The win continues to dangle by a hair, that is to say, it depends on a study-like resource; cf. the note to Black’s 41st move.

41.♚e3

The sealed move.

41…c5

The main variation runs: 41…b5 42.♘d2! h4 43.g4 h3 44.♔f3 c5 45.♘e4 c4 46.b4 ♔b6, for the entry of the black king looks awkward enough – the more so because there isn’t enough time to gather in the g5-pawn. Now comes the point: 47.♔g3, and if 47…♔c6, then (and not before!) the longed-for pawn capture suddenly become possible, that is, with 48.♘xg5 c3 49.♘f3! and wins.

42.a4 b5 43.axb5 axb5 44.♞d2 ♚b6 45.♞e4 h4 46.g4 h3 47.♚f3 b4!

A final, ingenious flare-up before the fire dies out.

48.♞xg5 c4 49.♞e4 cxb3

Or 49…c3 50.♘f2 and 51.♘d3.

50.g5 b2 51.♞d2 ♚c5 52.g6 h2 53.♚g2 ♚d4 54.g7 ♚d3 55.g8♛ ♚xd2 56.♛a2 ♚c2 57.♛c4+

Black resigned. A titanic struggle.

Game 101

Aron Nimzowitsch
Karl Gilg
Kecskemet 1927 (7)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

This move is much better than its reputation and grants White at least a sound equality.

3…♕c7

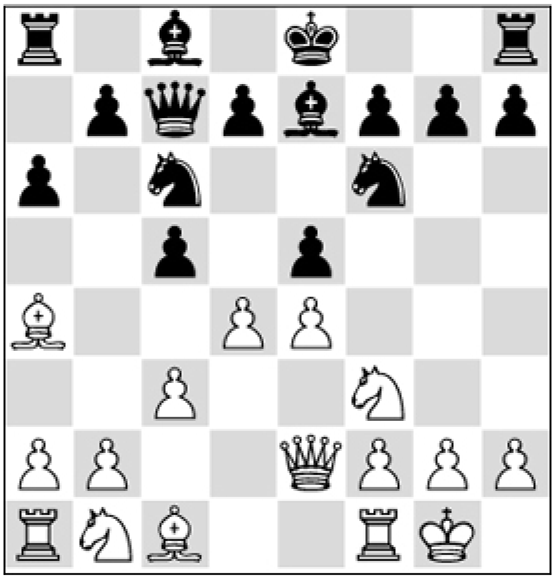
3…d6 may well be best.

4.c3!

For now the otherwise disagreeable counter-stroke …♘f6, after c2-c3, is easy to parry – White can in fact do so comfortably with ♕e2.

4…a6 5.♗a4 ♘f6 6.♕e2 e5 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d4

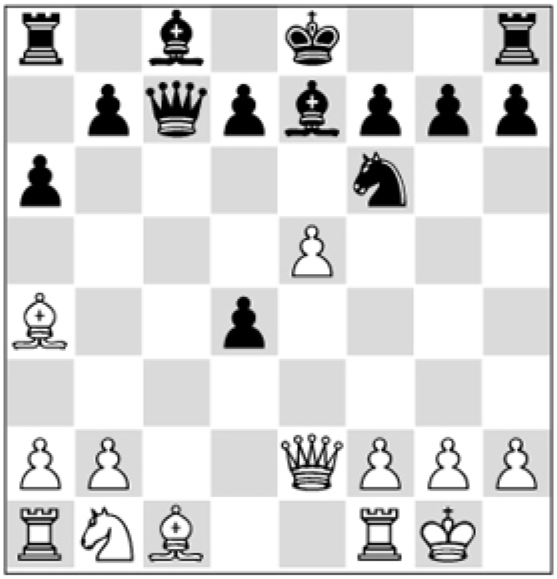
White offers a pawn, which Black should have declined with 8…d6.



8…cxd4

8…0-0 would also be insufficient because of 9.♗xc6 ♕xc6 10.dxe5 ♘xe4 11.♖e1 f5 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♕xe7 ♖e8 14.♕xe8+ ♘xe8 15.♖xe8+ ♔f7 16.♘e5+, White coming out a piece up.

9.cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.e5



11…d3

If 11…♘d5, then 12.e6 fxe6 13.♕xe6 ♘b6 14.♗g5! ♕d8 15.♗xe7 ♘xa4! 16.♕b3 ♕xe7 17.♕xa4, with the better game for White. But less clear is the continuation 14.♖e1 ♕d8 15.♗g5 ♘xa4 16.♕xe7+ ♕xe7 17.♖xe7+ ♔f8, with an uncertain advantage.

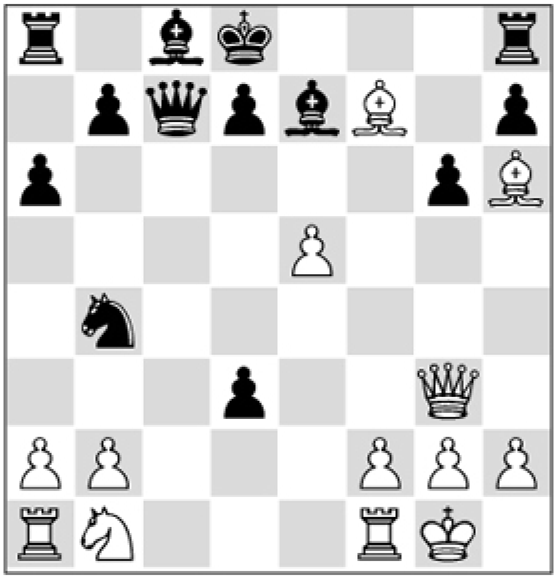
12.♕e3! ♘d5

12…♗c5, too, would not bring salvation; e.g., 13.♕g3 ♘e4 14.♕xg7 ♗xf2+ 15.♔h1 (not 15.♖xf2 because of 15…♕xc1+ 16.♖f1 ♕e3+ and mate in four moves) 15…♖f8 16.♗h6 ♗c5 17.e6! and wins.

13.♕g3 g6

On 13…0-0 there follows, to begin with, 14.♗b3.

14.♗b3 ♘b4 15.♗xf7+! ♔d8 16.♗h6!



This bishop hardly looks as though it has its eye on b6, yet such is the case!

16…♘c2 17.♘c3 ♘d4

Desperation. If 17…♘xa1, then 18.♘d5 ♕c6 (best) 19.♗e3! d6 20.♗b6+ ♔d7 21.e6 mate!! After the text move, White has an elegant win.

18.♕xd3 ♕xe5 19.♖fe1 ♕f6 20.♖xe7

1-0

On 20…♔xe7 follows 21.♘d5+, and if 20…♕xe7, 21.♕xd4.

9. Heroic defense

One would assume, a priori, that *all* facets of practical chess play have been influenced in *equal* measure by the new thinking. But this is not so. The realm of defense seems stubbornly to shrink from the invigorating influence of modern thought. In fact, it almost seems as though the pseudo-classical line of thought, banished from all ‘positions’, intends to entrench itself in the territory in question. At any rate, the progress made in this area has only been minimal. A target for attack in one’s own camp causes one to tremble, and in other ways too a manifestly formalistic understanding seems to prevail. The anxious concern for meticulous correctness and the timid avoidance of unfamiliar paths, and, in particular, the fear of the ‘*colossal*, of anything operating on a large scale – all this vividly calls to mind the long-departed pseudo-classical epoch!

In our opinion, the error lies in the fact that all too little use is being made of the newly developed stratagems. The application of prophylaxis, restraint, centralization, and over-protection should be of the greatest concern in the realm of defense. In fact, we even take the view that through the use of these stratagems the whole art of defense could be brought to a higher level. It makes a vast difference whether that portion of the board that is under fire by the enemy has to rely on its own resources or whether the *whole* board radiates with defensive energy. For what is centralization, by way of example, but a deep-level participation in events over the whole board?

We present four games that are to illustrate heroic defense. They clearly show an intensive cooperation of the battle motifs mentioned above.

In Game 102 a ‘small’ center is most emphatically *over-protected,* and as a result this center imparts strength to an otherwise quite undeveloped formation. The backward development adopted on moves 9 and 10 for this purpose are of a truly modern spirit.

In Game 103, what is most remarkable is the uninhibitedness by which the defense is conducted; for the purposes of defense, use is made of a most improbable line borrowed from the realm of artistic endgame composition.

Game 104 is especially noteworthy in that the *new* defensive technique comes into its own in full measure: a vehement wing attack is brought to a standstill through correctly timed counterplay, namely a *central action* carried out with great intensity. Incidentally, this game is also significant for the anti-pseudo-classic ‘colossality’ we mentioned above. Attacks of immense power are neutralized by counter-measures of equal force. In this connection we might say: inasmuch as this ‘large scale’ is essentially nothing more than the product of a new mindset and does not require a particularly outstanding playing strength besides, it should by no means be unattainable by less-experienced players.

In Game 105, also, the defensive technique based on hypermodern principles celebrates a complete triumph. The opponent’s dark-square attack was held up by a timely utilization of counter-motifs on the light squares, until the opportunity presented itself to initiate a ‘light-square coup d’etat’ by giving back the extra material. (This is similar to Alekhine’s coup d’etat in Game 100, but with the difference that the coup instigated in Game 105 was conducted on a sounder basis.)

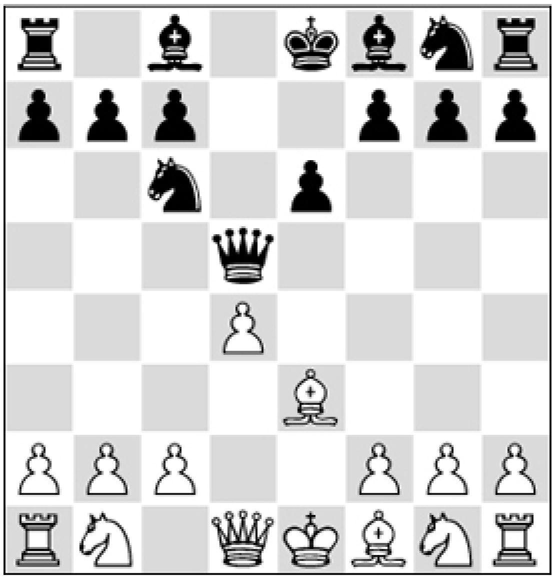
The number of *great defensive players* is quite small. The author knows only of the following names: Steinitz, Dr. Emanuel Lasker, Amos Burn, Dr. Osip Bernstein, Oldrich Duras, and, last but not least, Louis Paulsen. We hope that our researches will contribute to increasing the number of good defensive players. We wish to take this opportunity to state, with satisfaction, that a number of the younger masters; e.g., the strategically brilliant Sämisch, show an interest in and skill at the defense of difficult positions.
Good hunting!

Game 102

Alfred Brinckmann
Aron Nimzowitsch

Berlin 1927 (3)

1.e4 ♞c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 ♛xd5 4.♝e3 e6



5.♝e2

As discussed in Game 99, 5.♘f3 would have caused his opponent trouble enough. Even so, the bishop move is also strong.

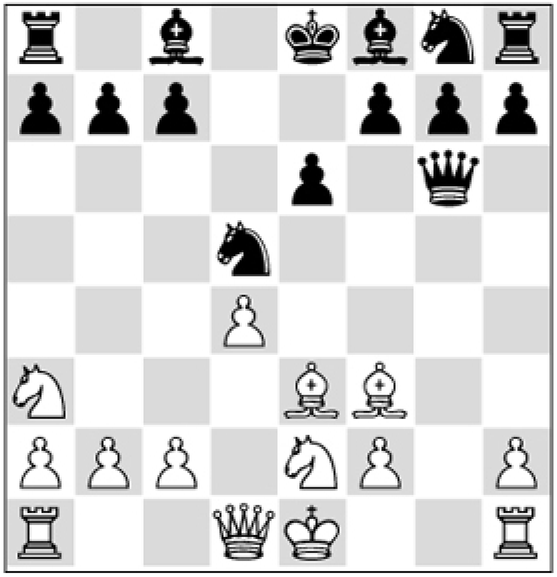
5…♕xg2!

We have faith in the strength of the defense.

6.♗f3 ♕g6 7.♘e2 ♘b4

Modern defensive technique relies on pressure: a *centralization* (…♘d5) is being prepared.

8.♘a3 ♘d5



9.♘c4

The correct continuation lay in 9.♘b5; e.g., 9…c6 (best) 10.♘f4! ♘xf4 11.♘c7+ ♔d7 12.♘xa8 ♘g2+, with an unclear outcome (trials undertaken by Dr. Lasker in conjunction with the author resulted in a draw).

9…♕f6!! 10.♘g3 ♕d8!

What is the meaning of this maneuver? It is two-fold! The queen is looking for safety, and the centralization-idea becomes most sharply emphasized, for already there are three pieces opposing the enemy breakthrough plan of c2-c4 and d4-d5 (after the c4-knight moves away, of course). In brief: the *centralized knight* is being *over-protected*. For the rest, it is clear that the retreat maneuver that Black has chosen has a most neo-romantic effect, for in playing it he shows clearly that he has faith in the power of resistance inherent in the initial position, whereas the pseudo-classicists, in contrast, were fanatics of quick development.

11.♕d2 ♘gf6

Ongoing over-protection!

12.♘e5 c6!

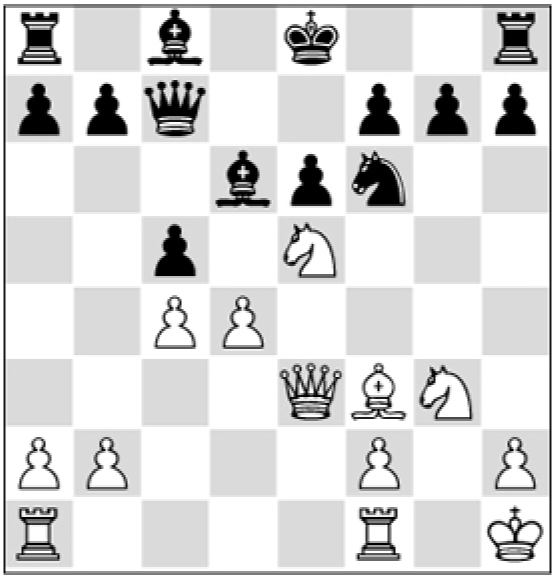
‘Over-protecting’ and ‘marking time’ simultaneously! He would like to leave open the possibility of castling on either side for as long as possible until his opponent shows his colors – that is, until he has castled kingside or queenside. This ability to wait is for Black another resource in his cramped position. Recall the fourth chapter of this section, ‘The Small Center’.

13.0-0!

On 13.0-0-0, 13…♗b4 would have followed; e.g., 14.c3 ♗e7, when Black is preparing to castle queenside with …♕c7 (or …a7-a5 first), …♗d7, and …♖f8!.

13…♗d6 14.♔h1 ♕c7 15.c4 ♘xe3 16.♕xe3 c5

A counter-attack always has an excellent effect, and in a psychological sense as well – this was already known to our ancestors. But the position is also made somewhat looser. Hence 16…♘d7! should be given the preference.



17.♕g5

In order to punish his opponent for his ‘cockiness’. But more correct was 17.♖ae1 cxd4 18.♕xd4 ♗d7, although also in this case Black would not be in any real danger (19.♘f5? exf5 20.♘g6+ ♗e6 21.♘xh8 ♔e7 and wins).
And 17.♘d3 cxd4 18.♕xd4 also came into question.

17…cxd4 18.♜ae1

If 18.♕xg7, then 18…♖g8 19.♕xf6 ♗xe5, with a slight advantage for Black.

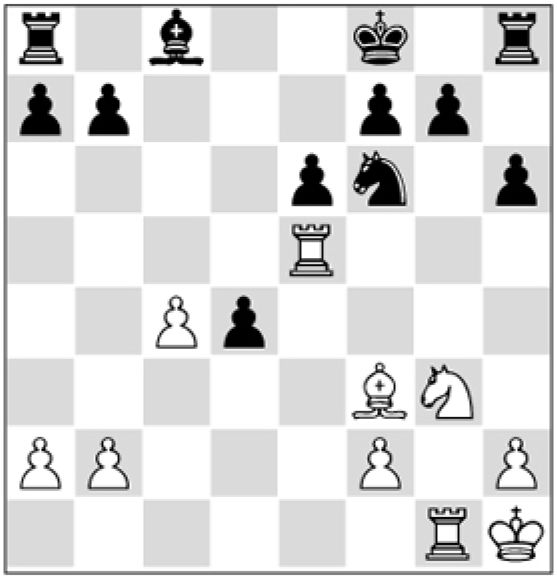
18…♚f8!

Castling would be wrong; e.g., 18…0-0 19.♖g1 h6 20.♕f4 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5 ♘d7 22.♘h5! ♕xe5 23.♕xh6 g6 24.♖g5 ♕h8 25.♖xg6+ and mate in two moves.

19.♜g1 h6 20.♛f4 ♝xe5 21.♛xe5

Or 21.♖xe5 ♘d7, etc.

21…♛xe5 22.♜xe5



22…♞d7

Simpler would have been 22…g6; e.g., 23.♖d1 ♔e7 24.♖xd4 ♖d8, with a winning ending.

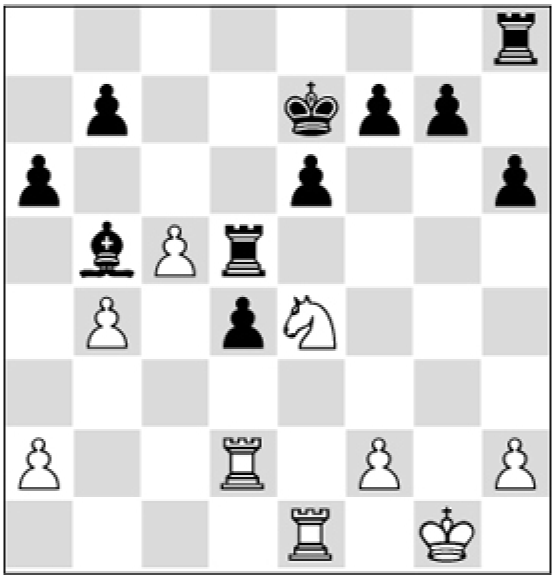
23.♜b5

Black would have had to overcome considerably greater difficulties after 23.♖a5!.

23…a6 24.♖b3

Or 24.♖b4 ♘e5 25.♗g2 (25.♗xb7? ♖b8) 25…♘d3!, with the threat 26…♘xf2#.

24…♘c5 25.♖a3 ♖b8 26.b4 ♘d7 27.c5 ♘e5 28.♖e1 ♘xf3 29.♖xf3 ♗d7 30.♖d3 ♖d8 31.♔g1 ♗b5 32.♖d2 ♖d5 33.♘e4 ♔e7



34.♘d6

A mistake in a hopeless position. On 34.f3, which was the relatively best move, Black would play 34…♖b8; e.g., 35.♘d6 b6 36.♘xb5 axb5 37.cxb6 ♖xb6 and Black wins easily.

34…♖g5+ 35.♔h1 ♗c6+

0-1

Game 103

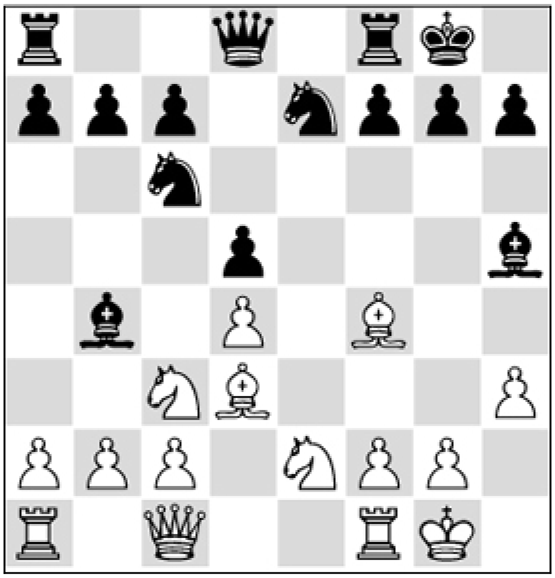
Paul Leonhardt
Aron Nimzowitsch
Berlin 1928 (5)

The game started out in pedestrian style, as follows:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.♘e2 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗f4 ♗g4 9.h3

Now Leonhardt suddenly looks to be initiating an attack. But simpler is 9.f3 ♗h5 10.♕f2, or 10.♗e3 and 11.♘f4. The new weakness at e3 would be easy to bear.

9…♝h5 10.♛c1



10…♝a5!

It cannot exactly be said that Black is avoiding uncommon paths!

If 11.a3 (to prevent …♘b4), the intention was to play 11…♗xc3 (12.bxc3) and lure the pawn forward to a3, where it would constitute an element of weakness in an otherwise impeccable formation. Instead of 11… ♗xc3 (after 11.a3), other moves were of course possible, e.g., 11…♗b6 or 11…♗g6.

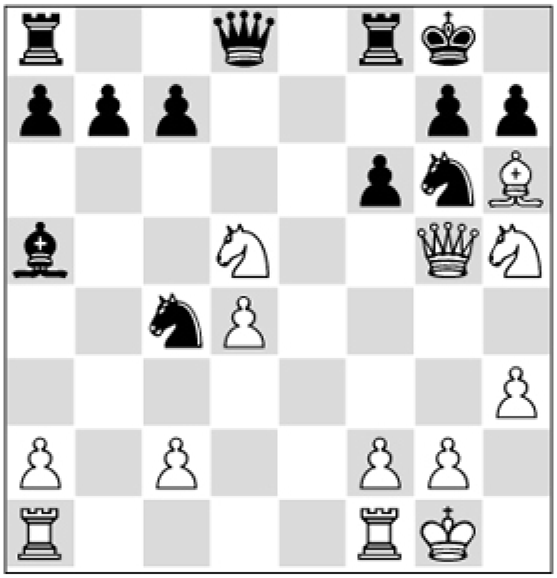
11.♛e3 ♞b4 12.♞g3 ♞xd3 13.♞xh5 ♞xb2! 14.♝h6!

The reply that Black expected.

14…♞c4! 15.♛g5

On 15.♕g3, the main variation, there would follow 15…♘f5 16.♕g4 g6!! 17.♗xf8 ♗xc3 and the bishop at f8 is without any possible retreat square – a Rinck motif that is known under the title ‘the bishop’s cross’.

15…♞g6 16.♞xd5 f6



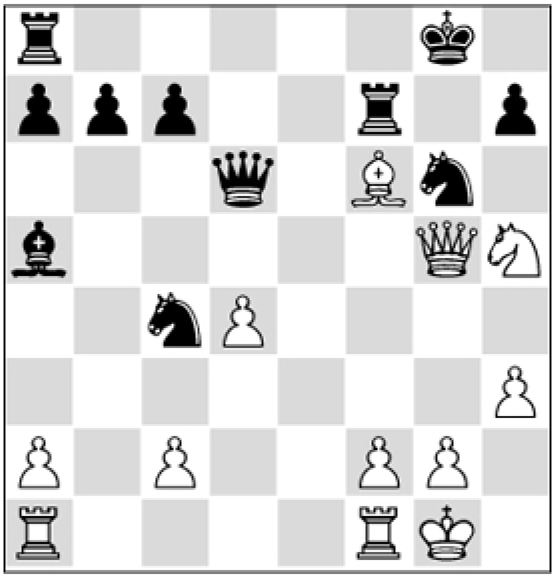
At this juncture Black had, besides the text move, two other good continuations. There is, first, the simple queen exchange 16…♕xg5 17.♗xg5 f6 18.♗e3 ♖ad8, with a superior ‘light-square’ ending. Further, there is the line discussed by Kostic: 16…♗d2; e.g., 17.♕xd8 ♖axd8 18.♗xd2 ♘xd2 19.♖fd1 ♖xd5 20.♖xd2 ♖xh5. Or 17.f4 ♕xg5 18.♗xg5 f6 19.f5 ♗xg5, with an extra pawn. Or, finally, 17.♘e3 gxh6 18.♕xd8 (18.♕xh6 ♕xd4) 18…♖axd8 19.♘xc4 ♖xd4 20.♖ad1 ♖fd8, again with a pawn plus.

But the line chosen looks even stronger.

17.♘dxf6+ ♖xf6

Or 17…gxf6 18.♕b5.

18.♗xg7 ♖f7 19.♗f6 ♕d6



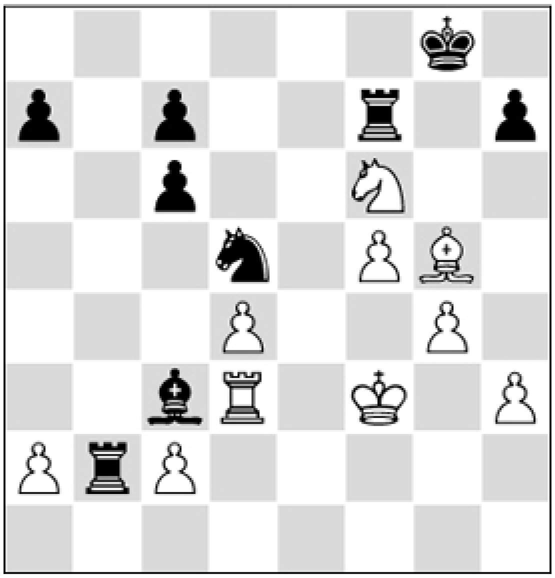
20.♜ad1

If 20.♕h6 there could follow 20…♖e8 21.f4 ♖e2 22.f5 ♗d2 23.fxg6 ♗xh6 24.gxf7+ ♔f8 and Black wins; or 23.♗g5 (instead of 23.fxg6) 23…♘e3, when Black not only has an extra piece but also a very strong attack.

20…♜af8 21.♛b5

If 21.♕h6, then 21…c6 (threatening 22…♗d8) 22.f4 ♘e3 23.f5 ♘xf1 24.♖xf1 (24.fxg6? ♕h2+, etc.) 24…♗d2 25.♕xd2 ♖xf6 26.♘xf6+ ♕xf6, with a win for Black.

21…♛c6 22.♛xc6 bxc6 23.♝g5 ♜f5 24.f4 ♞e3 25.g4 ♜5f7 26.f5 ♞xf1 27.♜xf1 ♝c3 28.♜d1 ♞e7 29.♜d3 ♞d5 30.♚g2 ♜b8 31.♚f3 ♜b2 32.♞f6+

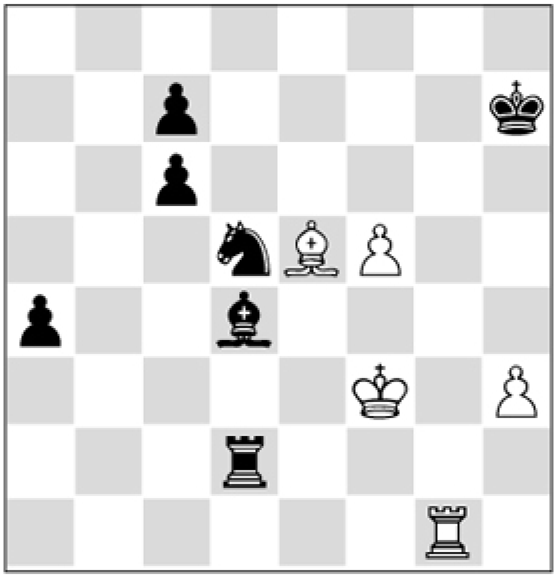


32…♖xf6

Because I did not wish to give up the fine central knight, but of course the simple 32…♘xf6 33.♖xc3 ♖b6 also would have won without difficulty. The rest is easy to understand.

33.♗xf6 ♖xa2 34.g5 ♖xc2 35.♗e5 a5 36.g6 a4 37.♖d1 ♖d2 38.♖b1 ♗b2 39.gxh7+ ♚xh7 40.♖g1 ♗xd4

Parrying everything.



41.♖g7+ ♔h8 42.♖g2+ ♗xe5 43.♖xd2 a3 44.♖e2 ♗b2 45.♖e8+ ♔g7 46.♖a8 ♘b4

White resigned.

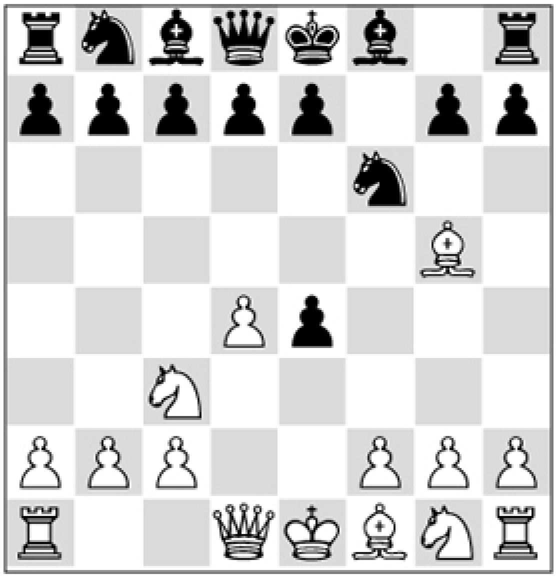
Game 104

Alfred Brinckmann

Aron Nimzowitsch

Copenhagen 1924 (4)

1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5



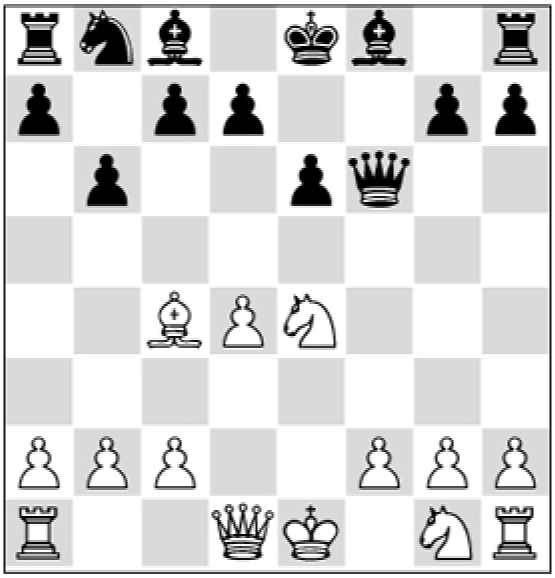
4…b6

An innovation that looks extremely risky. After the usual 4…♘c6, apart from 5.d5 ♘e5 6.♕d4 ♘f7 7.♗xf6 exf6 8.♘xe4 f5! 9.♘g3 g6 10.0-0-0 ♗h6+ 11.♔b1 0-0 12.♘f3! there is also the following line, worthy of note and as yet untried: 5.♗xf6! exf6 6.a3! f5 7.♗c4 ♘e7 8.d5, when White is ready to exploit the weakness on e6 that a potential …d7-d6 would create.

5.♗c4

The liquidation 5.♗xf6! exf6 6.a3! (as outlined in the previous note) looks much better, as it entails serious difficulties for Black.

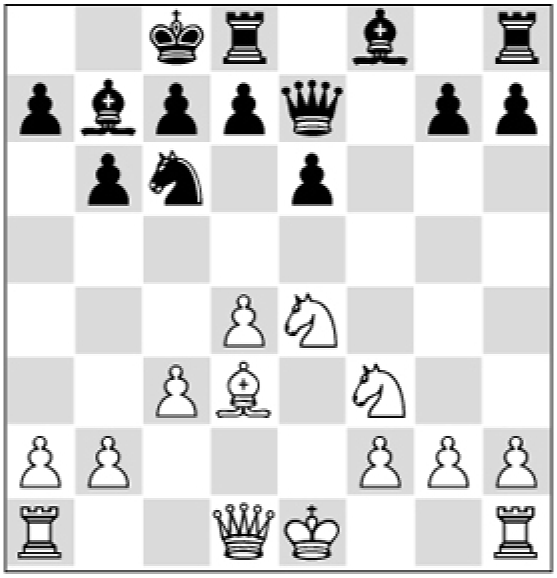
5…e6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.♘xe4



7…♕e7!

Only a few moves have been played and already the position offers an abundance of fanciful possibilities. Note, for instance, the following variations: 7…♕g6 8.♕f3 ♗b7! (not 8…d5 because of 9.♗d3!) 9.♘d6+? ♗xd6 10.♕xb7 0-0 11.♕xa8 ♘c6 and 12…♕xg2; or 9.♘f6+? ♕xf6 10.♕xb7 ♕xd4 11.♕xa8 ♗b4+ 12.c3 ♗xc3+! 13.♔f1 0-0 and Black must win; or, finally, 7…♕g6 8.♕f3 ♗b7 9.♗d3! ♗b4+ 10.c3 ♖f8 11.♘d6+ ♔e7 12.♘xb7 ♖xf3 13.♗xg6 ♖xc3 14.♔e2 ♖c4 15.♗d3 ♖xd4 16.a3 and White should win. The attempt 7…♕g6 should therefore have led to a disadvantage for Black.

8.♗d3 ♘c6 9.c3 ♗b7 10.♘f3 0-0-0



Now Black has happily reached a position that according to the generally accepted view is not considered defensible. But the generally accepted view is not always correct. For instance, only a very few positions are thought to be capable of defense, when the reality is that the great majority of them can in fact be held.

For that matter, in the position before us, 10…d5 followed by …e6-e5 would also have been possible; for example, 11.♘eg5 e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.0-0 ♘xf3+ 14.♘xf3 0-0-0, although Black would retain certain weaknesses on the e-file and on the light squares, for instance after 15.♕a4 ♔b8 16.♖ae1 ♕f6 17.♘e5. Such a result need not make us wonder, for only seldom does a *sudden* transition to the open game tend to go smoothly.

11.0-0 ♜g8!

For the sake of undertaking a central action, the idea being …g7-g5-g4 with relief of the e5-square. Instead, ‘liberation’ with 11…d5 12.♘g3 e5 could again be considered, but this would be a mistake on account of 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖e1. But the following variation, rather outside the bounds of contemporary rote-playing, would be playable: 11…d5 12.♘g3 h5 13.h4 and *now* 13…e5, as the aforementioned capture on e5 (♘xe5) would now fail (the pawn at h4 is hanging).

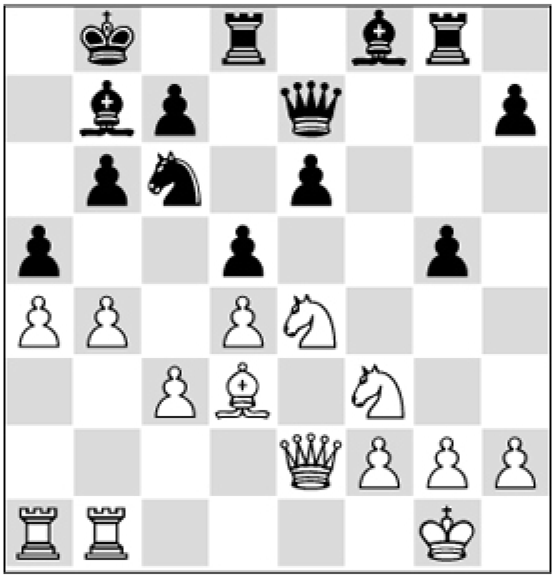
12.♛e2 ♚b8 13.a4

Perhaps 13.♗a6 deserved preference; the pawn storm can always be played.

13…a5

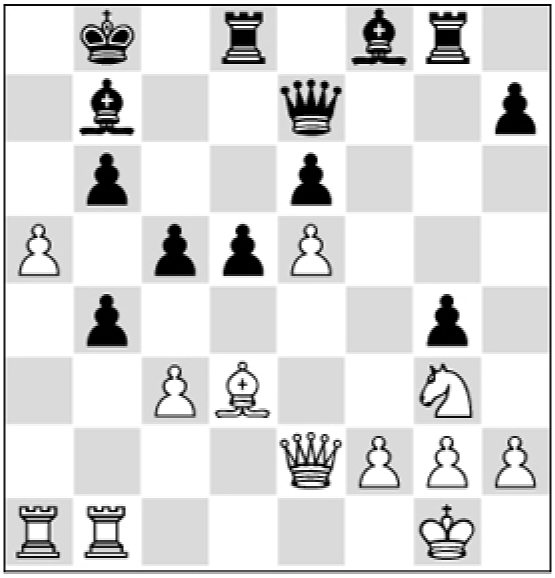
The a-pawn… not blockaded by a bishop on a4, now reveals its mobility.

14.♖fb1 g5 15.b4 d5



At the right moment, as the knight on e4 can no longer go to its most favorable square, d2. For if 16.♘ed2, then 16… axb4, when the intended 17.a5 is no longer feasible on account of 17…bxc3, with an attack on d2.

16.♘g3 axb4 17.a5 g4 18.♘e5 ♘xe5 19.dxe5 c5!



With 20.axb6 White could now force the remarkable sequence of moves that his opponent was contemplating: 20.axb6 c4 21.cxb4 ♖c8! (the opening of the c-file would be disastrous for Black: 21…cxd3? 21.♕a2!, etc.) 22.♕a2 ♖c6 23.♕a7+ ♔c8 24.b5 ♖c5!!. One does not see such a rook position every day!

The resulting position is full of tension: powerful attacks ricochet off just as mighty defensive resources – the position is of a thoroughly *heroic* nature. To illustrate this we give: 25.♗e2 ♗g7 26.♗xg4 ♗xe5 27.♖e1 ♖xg4 28.♖xe5 c3 29.♘f5 ♕d7 30.♕a3 ♖gc4 31.♘e3 ♕xb5 32.♘xc4 ♕xc4 33.♖xe6 c2 34.♖ee1 and White should win. But Black can improve on his play: 25.♗e2 ♗g7 26.♗xg4 ♗xe5 27.♖e1 d4 with enormous complications. Instead, White played:

20.cxb4 cxb4 21.♜c1

If 21.axb6, simply 21…♕c5 would follow.

21…♝h6 22.♜cb1 ♛c5 23.axb6 ♛xb6 24.♜a4 ♝f8 25.♞h5

The knight threatens to establish itself on f6.

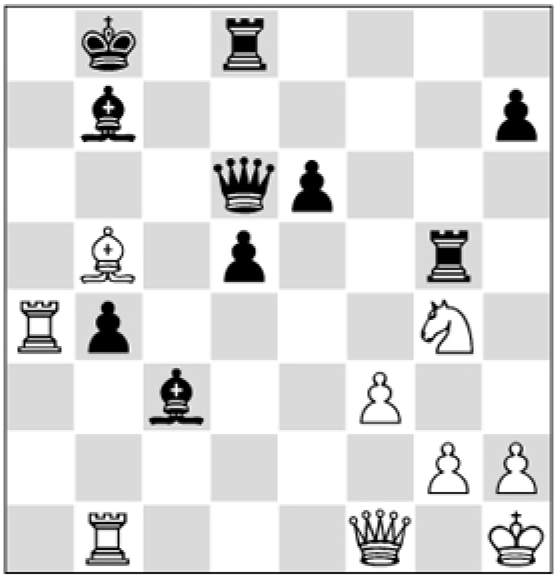
25…♝c5 26.♞f6 ♜g7 27.♝b5 ♝c8 28.♜ba1 ♝b7

Black is incessantly ‘harassed’.

29.♚h1

White, who has conducted his game with remarkable élan, again should have played 29.♖b1.

29…♝d4! 30.♖b1 ♝c3 31.♘e8 ♜g5 32.♕f1 ♜xe5 33.♘f6 ♛d6 34.♘xg4 ♜g5 35.f3



35…♜dg8?

By sounding his kingside attack, Black temporarily forsakes his master plan (central play against a wing attack)! Correct, and more in the nature of the position, was 35…♖gg8.

36.♝a6! ♛b6 37.♕d3 ♜c8

A prompt retreat of the rooks is mandatory!

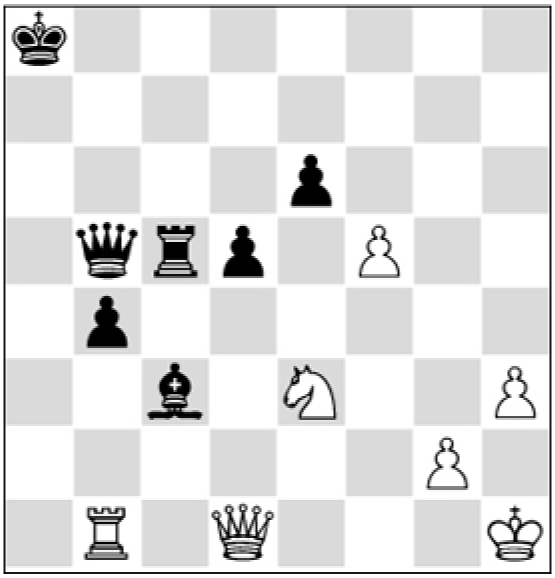
38.♝xb7 ♚xb7 39.♕xh7+ ♜c7 40.♕d3 ♜g8 41.h3?

Better was 41.♘e3, with the threats 42.♘d1 or 42.♘c2.

41…♜gc8 42.♘e3 ♜c5 43.f4? ♛b5

Consolidation.

44.♕d1 ♜a8! 45.♖xa8 ♚xa8 46.f5



A lapse on the part of White, but his position is untenable, anyway: the bishop on c3 and the passed pawns are all-supreme.

46…d4 47.f6 dxe3 48.♕f3+ ♛c6 49.♕xe3 ♝xf6 50.♖f1

Or 50.♖xb4 ♜c1+ 51.♔h2 ♕d6+ 52.♖f4 ♗e5.

50…♜c2 51.♕g3 ♝e5 52.♕g8+ ♚b7

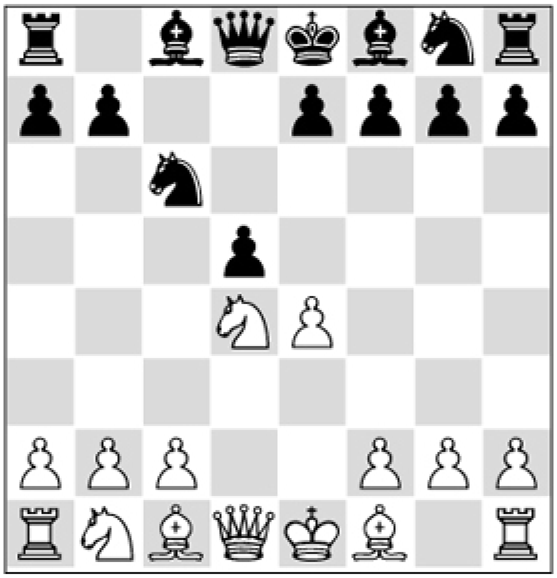
0-1

Game 105

Akiba Rubinstein
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1923 (13)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 d5

This innovation, adopted for the first time on this occasion, leads to intricate positions and is therefore recommendable only to those who do not think there is ‘one single, strictly correct’ way, namely, the broad highway. A hike in the mountains that leads over precipices but which also opens up magnificent vistas, is not of course for timid souls.



5.exd5

Regarding the main variation possible at this point, 5.♗b5 dxe4!, cf. Game 44. Dr. Lasker recommends 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.exd5 ♕xd5 7.♘c3 ♕xd1+ 8.♘xd1 here, but the endgame advantage thus gained by White seems to us to be of a problematic nature.

5…♛xd5 6.♝e3 e6!

6…e5 would be bad because of the reply 7.♘b5; Black needs the e5-square for the queen. Had Black already played his a-pawn to a6, which can also occur on the *white* side of the Sicilian, …e7-e5 would indeed be feasible, but it is not a variation suited to guarantee the second player easy or comfortable play. This sort of game is set up precisely for heroic defense and not for easygoing wood-pushing.

Compare the opening moves of our game with Norman-Hansen (Black) in July, 1923: **1.c4 e5 2.a3** White is now playing a Sicilian with an extra move. **2…♞f6 3.♞c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.d4 exd4 6.♛xd4 ♝e6 7.e4 ♞c6 8.♝b5 ♞e7! 9.♞ge2 a6 10.♝a4 b5! 11.♛xd8+ ♜xd8 12.♝c2 ♞e5** (12…♘a5 could also be played) and Black gets some playing space in the middle of the board. The ‘energetic’ thrust 7.e4 would have been better replaced by the restrained 7.e3!; e.g., 7…♘c6 8.♗b5. If now 8…♘e7, then 9.♕e4!. Indeed, even after 9.♘f3 (instead of 9.♕e4) White would stand better than in the game (because he would be more solid) after the further moves 9…a6 10.♗a4 b5

11.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 12.♗c2. The light-hearted advance e2-e4 (or …e7-e5 in the case of the Sicilian for Black) does not quite seem to fit into this ponderous set-up.

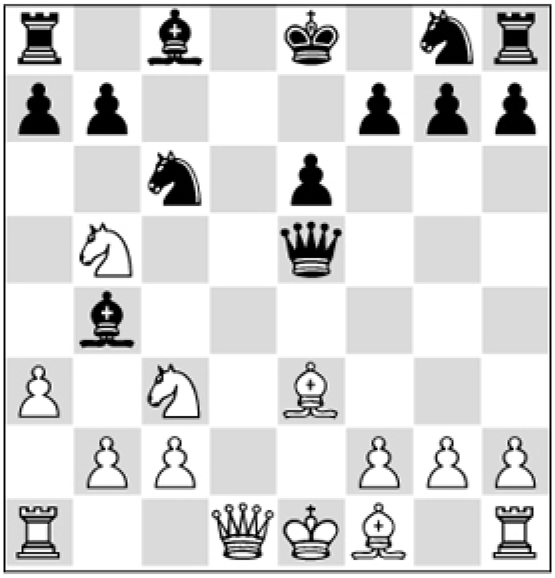
7.♘c3 ♝b4 8.♘b5

Here, 8.♗e2 ♘ge7 (8…♕xg2 9.♗f3) 9.0-0 was also possible.

8…♛e5!

The brighter side of the restrained 6…e6 now comes to light.

9.a3



9…♝xc3+!

The retreat to e7 would also be good enough; e.g., 9…♗e7 10.♗e2 a6 11.♘d4 ♘f6, looking to play …0-0 and …♖d8. But the continuation chosen is in our view more consequential, for the ‘black-square’ assault that his opponent is now in a position to initiate can surely be withstood, and on the other hand the avoidance of complications would be contradictory to the whole make-up of the game. Now we get to see a terrible struggle.

10.bxc3!?

After 10.♘xc3 ♘f6 White would have the two bishops, but the second player would be better centralized. The text makes it possible to infiltrate into d6, though at the cost of a pawn

10…a6 11.♘d6+ ♚e7 12.♘c4 ♛xc3+ 13.♗d2 ♛d4

To parry 14.♗b4+ with 14…♘xb4!.

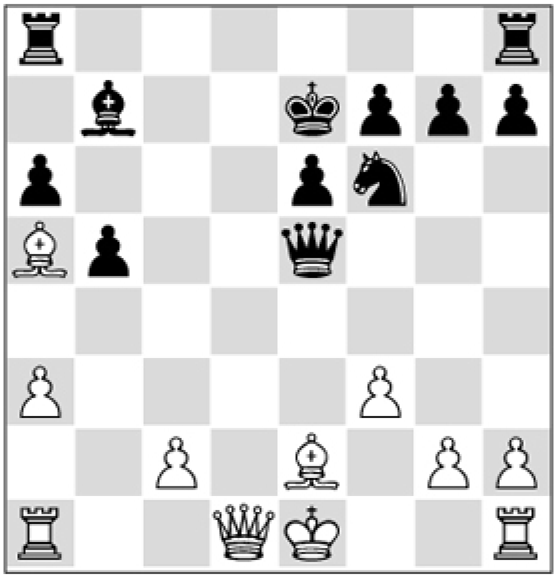
14.♝d3 b5

To drive the knight away from the ‘black’ points. At the same time a counter-action, based on the light squares (…♗b7), gets under way.

15.♘a5 ♕e5+ 16.♝e2 ♘xa5 17.♝xa5 ♝b7

To force the exchange of queens with …♕d5 in the event of White’s 18.0-0.

18.f3 ♘f6



At last Black has found the time and leisure to develop the poor knight. But the opportunities now offered to it at d5 and e3 are ample recompense for the protracted delay.

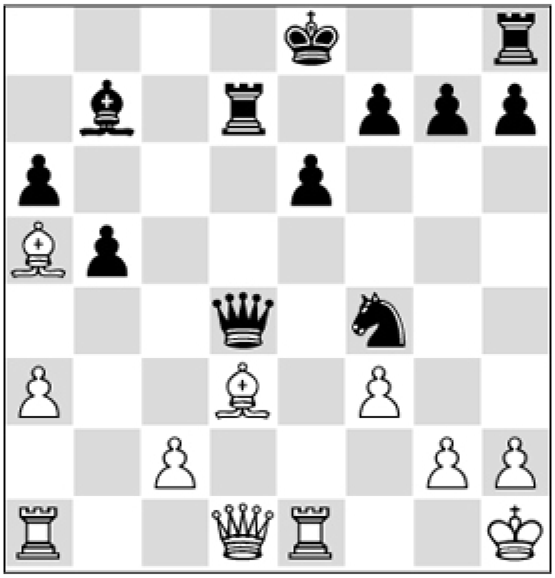
19.♝b4+ ♚e8

Le Roi s’amuse!

20.0-0 ♜d8 21.♝d3 ♘d5 22.♝a5 ♜d7 23.♜e1 ♕d4+

‘The black queen always has a way out with check’, notes the book of the congress with astonishment(!)

24.♚h1 ♘f4



In order to do away with the ‘two bishops’. That this is possible is thanks to intensive centralization.

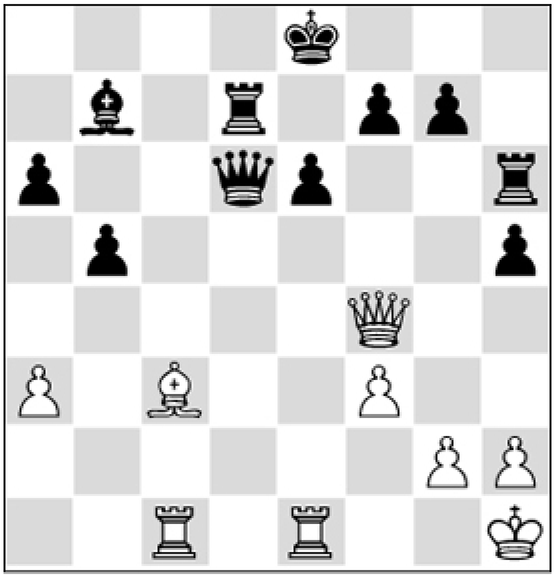
25.♕d2 ♘xd3 26.cxd3 h5!

With a rook less in play Black must for the time being forgo (with thanks) the pawn at d3. Instead, he plans the maneuver …h5-h4 followed by …♖h5-d5 or …♖h6-g6.

27.♖ac1 ♖h6 28.♗c3

Here, 28.♖e3 (with ♖ce1 to follow) would be rather more appropriate, for in the first place the pawn at d3 is less taboo than White rather optimistically seems to think; and secondly, Black’s development …f7-f6 and …♔f7 would have been forestalled.

28…♕xd3 29.♕f4 ♕d6



30.♕g5?

An anti-prophylactic move that actually facilitates his opponent’s intended …f7-f6 and …♔f7 (cf. the previous note). The right move here was 30.♕e3.

30…f6 31.♕e3 e5 32.♗b4

He is still filled with dark-square malevolence.

32…♕d4 33.♕b3 ♕d5 34.♕c2 ♕d3 35.♕c5 ♔f7 36.♖c2 ♖h8

By which Black is finally able to complete the development of his forces.

37.♖d2 ♕f5 38.♖xd7+ ♕xd7 39.♕c2! ♗c8!

On 39…♖c8, 40.♕h7 would have followed.

40.♖d1 ♕f5

The defense naturally proceeds along the light squares.

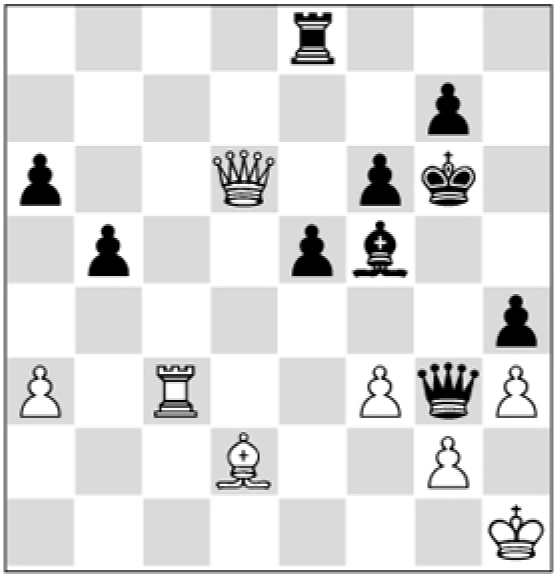
41.♕c7+ ♔g6 42.h3 ♖e8 43.♖c1 ♕f4 44.♖c6 ♗f5

Threatening 45…♖c8.

45.♕d6 h4

Stronger than 45…♖e6.

46.♗d2 ♕g3 47.♖c3



47…a5!

A ‘coup d’etat’: he gives back all his extra material but obtains a combined attack on both wings at the same time (cf. the next note).

48.f4 ♛f2 49.♜f3 ♛e2 50.fxe5 ♜xe5 51.♜f4 b4! 52.axb4 a4 53.♜xh4 a3 54.♚h2 a2

White is of course irretrievably lost: on the one side he has to tame a passed pawn, and on the other is faced with a mating attack. The rest is still quite interesting, however.

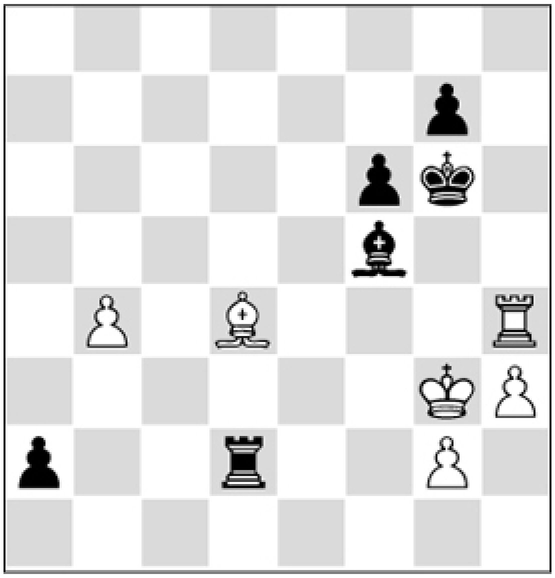
55.♝c3 ♛e3 56.♝b2

56.♗xe5? ♕xe5+ 57.♕xe5 fxe5 and the a-pawn goes on to queen.

56…♛e1 57.♛d4 ♜e3

Threatening 58…♕g3+, etc.

58.♛f4 ♜e4 59.♛g3+ ♛xg3+ 60.♚xg3 ♜e2 61.♝d4 ♜d2



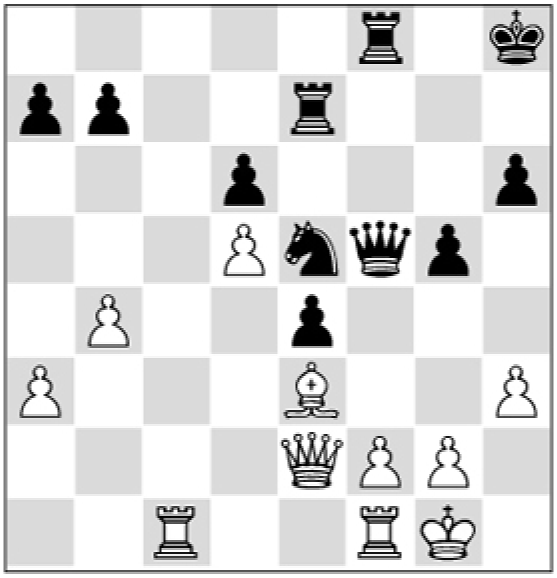
White resigned, as there could follow 62.♗a1 ♖d1 63.♗b2 ♖b1 64.♗d4 ♖b3+ followed by 65…♖xb4, …♖xd4, and …a1♕. The calamity for White (in the concluding phase) lies in the fact that he had to pay too high a price (in the displacement of his rook) for winning the h-pawn.

Black’s queen moves are a notable feature of this game: they seem to have had no other purpose than to ward off any danger occurring at the moment, and hence seemed to lack any unifying, fundamental idea. In reality, however, what we saw here is a well-planned use of the central terrain that Black had available, with at the same time an emphasis on the light-square counter-chances inherent in the position. Hence: centralization plus light-square counterplay on the one side of the board and powerful dark-square pressure on the other. The victory on the part of Black’s game may in such circumstances be spoken of as a triumph of ‘heroic defense’ based on modern strategy.

To conclude this section, we present an ending that illustrates with exceptional vividness the *basis* on which the heroic defense rests.

Game 106

Aron Nimzowitsch
Carl Behting
Riga 1909 (conclusion)

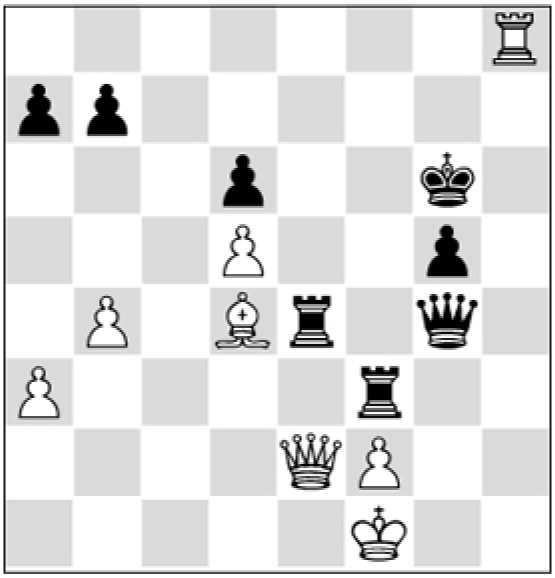


Black, on the move, made an obvious sacrifice:

1…♘f3+ 2.gxf3 ♕xh3 3.♗d4+ ♔g8 4.fxe4 ♖f3

And now White, not wishing to bite into the sour apple of a draw, consequently disdained the safe counter 5.♖fe1 and instead embarked upon a ‘gargantuan’ adventure, in the course of which he had to give up a whole rook to avert checkmate, ending up an exchange and pawn down, apparently without any compensation, when… there commenced the wonderfully fantastic adventure.

5.♖c8+ ♔h7 6.♖fc1 ♕g4+ 7.♔f1 ♖xe4 8.♖1c7+ ♔g6 9.♖g7+ ♔h5 10.♖xg5+! hxg5 11.♖h8+ ♔g6



Now White is at least rid of the mate threat on h3 (…♕h3+; ♔g1 ♖g4#), but at what a price! And the queen and bishop are still hanging. And no hint of an attack for White to be seen anywhere!

12.♕c2!

With this move White completes his defensive formation. The white defenders, in their ‘suspended’, ‘disjointed’ fantasy, contrast almost comically with the massively accumulated, brutally menacing enemy trio, the queen at g4 and the two rooks on e4 and f3. But what good are aesthetics when White has an exchange less and has to lose? No! White’s conduct of the heroic defense was based on *centralization*, and in point of fact on the bishop at d4 and the queen at c2 as central forces (the queen aiming at g6 by way of e4). This accumulated central energy, concentrated there *for purposes of defense*, is, however, also applicable for an attack, as is now shown. And quite imperceptibly a sharp threat has arisen, namely, 13.♖g8+, and if 13…♔h7?, then 14.♕c7+ ♔xg8 15.♕g7#.

12…♕f5 13.♕c7

With various pointed threats.

13…♖e1+

It is fortunate for Black that he still has an escape hatch.

14.♔xe1 ♕b1+ 15.♔e2 ♕d3+

Holding the draw by perpetual check.

In this finish, the heroic defense was based entirely on centralization. The attentive reader should, on the 12th move, try to establish the kind and extent of the *changes in function* experienced by each individual member of the white trio (queen on c2, bishop on d4, and rook on h8). The 12th move, as we know, was that important moment when the white pieces all of a sudden became transformed from defenders into storm troops. This concludes the 9th section, devoted to the heroic defense.

10. ‘Combinations that slumber beneath a thin coverlet’

With this term, Professor Adolf Anderssen, for it was he who applied this excellent description, meant the combinations of the closed game.

If this great old master of the classical period were alive today, it is not improbable that he would include in his characterization all the combinations of the hypermodern school. Indeed, modern combinations seem to hold to a certain inconspicuousness: at times they flit in ghostly fashion between the lines, without daring to venture out into the text itself. And even when, seized by a powerful wave, they are washed out of their subterranean existence and spill onto the surface of practical chess play, they still manifest a full measure of reserve (no thunder and lightning). And their modest appearance (see, e.g., 17…♘g6 in the note to the 16th move in Game 107) quite often – one could say, intentionally – stands in contrast to the contemplative depths that gave birth to them.

Of course we are far from wishing to maintain that modesty is to be counted among the most distinctive characteristics of our epoch, but there is *one* kind of modesty that seems to be typical of our age, and by this we mean the willingness to align oneself with the crowd (Reinhardt, Stanislawsky; think of the film ‘Potemkin’, in which there is only one main character, the masses!).

Another element (besides modesty) may come into consideration here: the solicitous handling, likewise typical of our age, of the purely technical. Of importance, too, lastly, may be the campaign conducted particularly by the author, which had set itself the goal of replacing the existing aesthetics of chess with a whole new outlook. The beautiful in chess is neither the accumulation of microscopic advantages nor a game played flawlessly from beginning to end. The beautiful in chess, rather, is anything that links the intricate events in a chess game with the laws of nature, so as to reveal ‘how kindly and wonderfully and mysteriously the benevolent Mother Nature discharges her duties’.

We have just been quoting from our treatise ‘What is Beautiful?’, which appeared in *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten*, Ex. 1926, p. 484, and we extract from it the following description of the struggle, which for us serves as a classic example of the new aesthetic in chess:

‘Through careless play Black finds himself on a slippery slope. But by tremendous exertion of the will he comes up with a move that just barely holds the position. A limit has been placed on the downward slide. And then there begins the forward progress, in defiance of all positional probabilities, after which the game is an outright draw. Why then does Black win? Well, because stopping the dissolution through the exertion of the will had to have the effect of unleashing the powers latently present in his position, which then came to fruition in a surprising way. The lung specialist knows these symptoms precisely: once the spread of the disease has stopped, then, without fail, we see an upward trend, the cure.’

Lack of space prohibits us from going into detail; instead we refer to the article mentioned above. But we believe that even with this brief intimation we have made a reasonable case that the modern combination is less ostentatious, that it prefers to forgo a cheap brilliance, and that it is more willing to subordinate itself to what transpires strategically than was the case with the combinations of the old school – and that therefore the modern combination fully merits the description given by Anderssen (even though he aimed it at someone else).

Game 107

Georg Fluss
Aron Nimzowitsch
Correspondence game, 1912/13

After the introductory moves…

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♝c4 ♝c5 5.d3 d6 6.♝g5 h6 7.♝h4 g5 8.♝g3 ♝g4

… White chose the maneuver:

9.h3

On the immediate 9.h4, 9…♘h5 would have been very strong; e.g., 10.hxg5 ♘xg3! 11.fxg3 ♘d4 12.♘d5 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♕xg5! and wins (14.g4 c6 15.♖h5 cxd5!!).

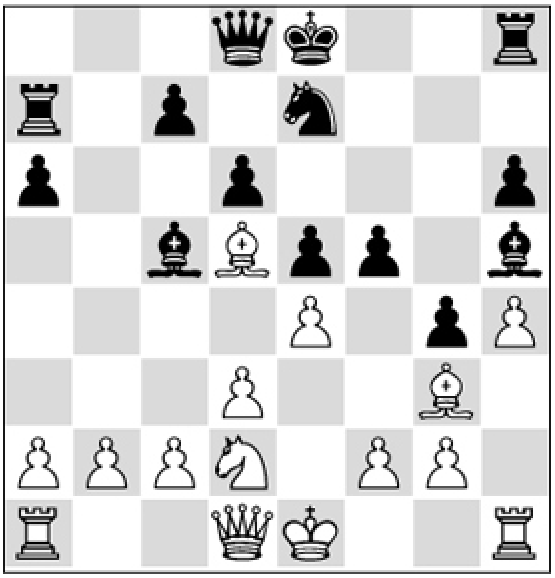
9…♝h5 10.h4 g4 11.♞d2 a6

A waiting move that at the same time is meant to forestall 12.♗b5.

12.♞d5 ♞xd5 13.♝xd5 ♞e7!

A pawn sacrifice with a quite unusual point.

14.♝xb7 ♜a7 15.♝d5 f5



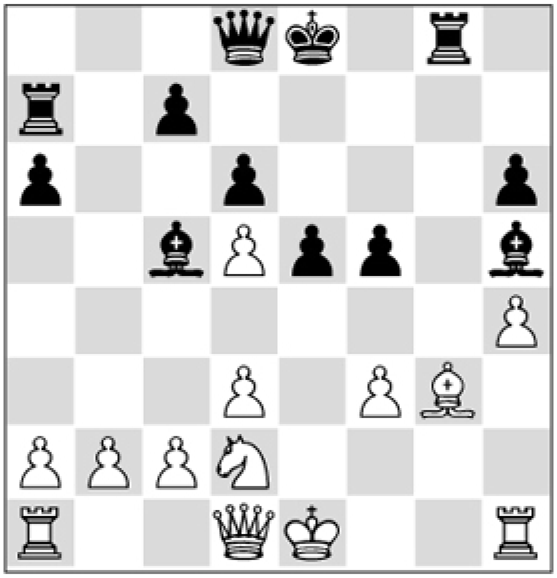
16.f4

The natural continuation 16.♗e6 f4 17.♗h2 would have revealed the point of the sacrifice. Black would have passed on the rowdy 17…♗xf2+!? and instead selected the protective move 17…♘g6, whose modesty is irresistible. After 17…♗xf2+? 18.♔f1 ♗e3 19.♘c4 ♘g6 (the only way to protect the important g-pawn) 20.♗g1!! ♗xg1 21.♗xg4! White would have the advantage. On the other hand, 17…♘g6! (to answer 18.♗xg4? with 18…♕xh4; note that after 18.♗xg4? ♕xh4 the knight on g6 stops the possible check 19.♗xh5) would be very effective; e.g., 18.g3 (to protect h4) 18…f3 and the bishop on h2 is shut out of the game. Or 17…♘g6 18.♗g1 f3 19.gxf3 gxf3 and …♘f4, with advantage to Black. We consider the renunciatory combination 17…♘g6 (and *not* 17…♗xf2+) exceedingly important in the sense of the remarks introducing this section.

In the diagrammed position, 16.♕e2 (instead of 16.♗e6) also came into consideration. There would follow 16…♘xd5 17.exd5 ♕a8 18.c4 (best; not 18.♗xe5 because of 18…0-0) 18…c6 19.dxc6 ♕xc6 and Black, who has, *inter alia*, a very mobile queen's rook – note the possibilities …♖e7 and …♖g7 – should have a decided advantage.

The move chosen, 16.f4, also has its downside.

16…gxf3 17.gxf3 ♞xd5 18.exd5 ♜g8



19.♞f1

On 19.♗f2 there would follow 19…♗xf2+ 20.♔xf2 c6!! – a move that helps the queen (and at the same time the queen's rook) attain a terrible agility; e.g., 21.dxc6 ♕b6+ 22.♔f1 ♖ag7 and mate in a few moves.

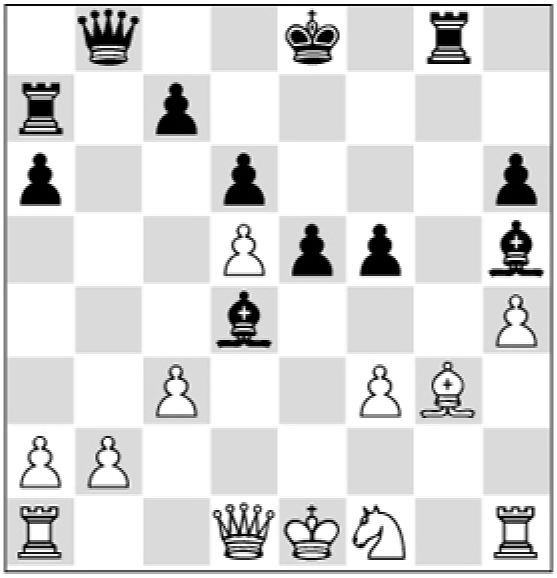
19…♛b8!

Much stronger than 19…e4, when 20.♕d2 would follow, threatening 21.♕xh6, and potentially ♕e6+.

20.d4

A last attempt to save the game; otherwise, e.g., after 20.b3 ♕b4+ 21.♔e2 e4; or 20.♖b1 ♖b7! 21.b3, Black doesn’t have the deadly check at b4 but is able to achieve a similar effect with 21…♗b4+ 22.♔f2 ♕a7+ 23.d4 ♗c3! and wins!

20…♝xd4 21.c3



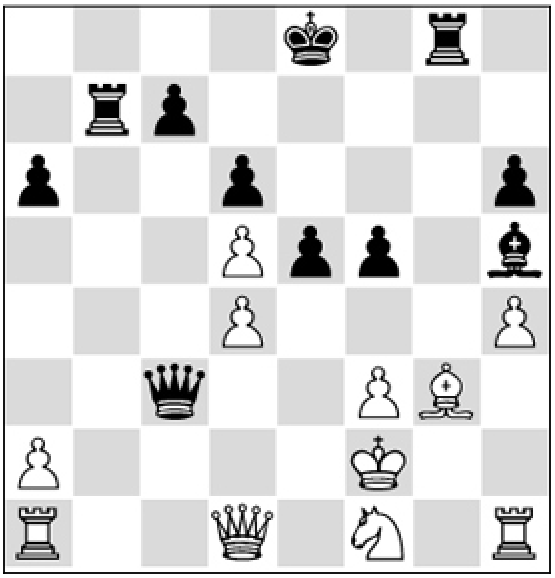
A sort of Evans Gambit; if now 21…♗c5, then 22.b4!, but…

21…♛xb2!!

An elegant finishing combination.

22.cxd4 ♛c3+ 23.♚f2 ♜b7!

Against this there is nothing to be done.



24.♜c1

Or 24.♖h2, with a similar course.

24…♜b2+ 25.♚g1 ♜xg3+

White resigned, for after 26.♘xg3 there follows 26…♕e3+ and mate on f2.

The same sacrifice would have follow 24.♖h2 (instead of 24.♖c1), when after 26…♕e3+ White would have 27.♔h1, but this would not have availed him in view of 27…♗xf3+.

Game 108

Aron Nimzowitsch
Orla Krause
Copenhagen 1924 (5)

This game makes no combinative impression at all, but it is literally teeming with brilliant, sparklingly colorful combinations – only these do not occur in the text of the game but cavort cavalierly and joyfully in the background. The reader should play over and take to heart the variations examined in the notes.

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗f4 d6

Dr. Krause's special variation, which he also tends to adopt in reply to 3.c4. The point of his move lies in the plan to force …e7-e5 through even at the cost of a pawn. Cf. Black's 6th move.

4.e3 h6 5.h4

Anticipating his opponent’s threatened expansion (…g7-g5 and …♗g7).

5…♞c6 6.d5

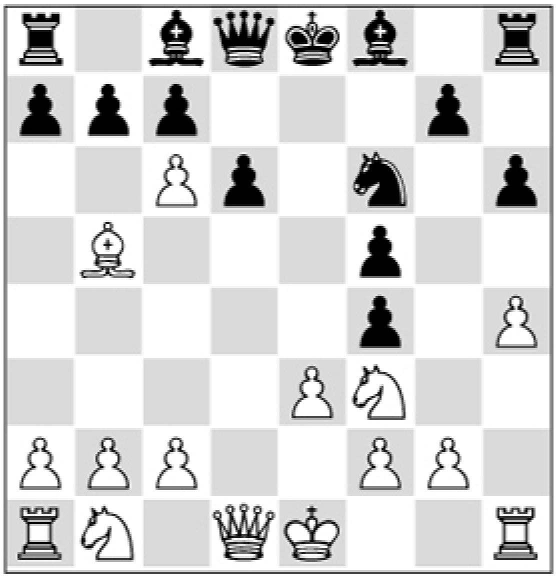
He has to play this now if ever. A waiting policy with 6.c4 or 6.♘bd2 would result in Black playing 6…♘g4, when the variations beginning with 7.d5 e5 would be less favorable for White than those after the game continuation (for …♘g4 would mean a significant extra tempo for Black).

6…e5

Dr. Krause’s prescription, which, however, does not seem fully adequate in this instance.

7.dxc6 exf4 8.♝b5

But not 8.cxb7 ♗xb7 9.exf4 ♕e7+ 10.♗e2 ♗xf3, when the f-pawns are tripled.



8…b6

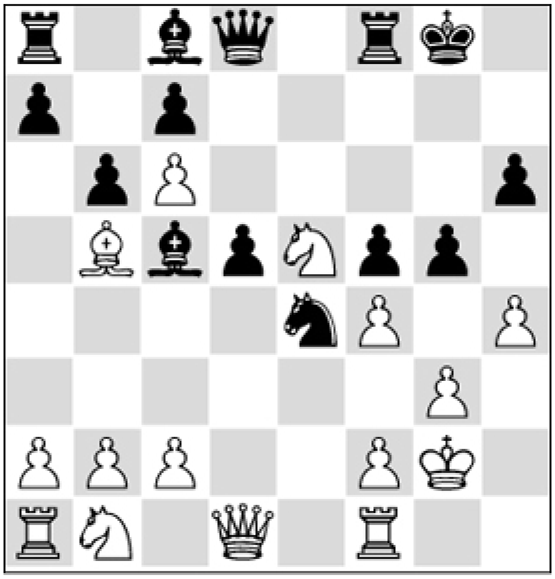
Dr. Krause recommends 8…♔f7 as better, and in fact both 9.exf4 ♕e7+ (not 9…♕e8+ because of 10.♘e5+! dxe5 11.cxb7 and wins) 10.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 11.♔xe2 bxc6 12.♗xc6 ♖b8 and 9.0-0 are unfavorable for White. For instance, 9.0-0 fxe3 10.♘e5+ ♔g8 11.fxe3 ♕e7! 12.♘g6 ♕xe3+ 13.♔h1 ♕g3 14.♘xh8 ♘g4 and wins. However, the unassuming centralizing move 9.♕d4 leads to a superior game for White. Examine: (8…♔f7) 9.♕d4 fxe3 10.fxe3 d5 11.♘e5+ ♔g8 12.♘d2 b6 13.b4 (to prevent …♗c5) and White clearly stands better. We note here the *calming* effect that the move ♕d4 had on a position so otherwise enlivened by combinative play! The admixture of positional moves is quite characteristic of the modern combination.

9.exf4 d5! 10.0-0 ♝c5 11.g3 ♞e4 12.♚g2 g5

Probably best, and at any rate the most incisive chance. Worth considering also was 12…♕d6. The sequel might be 13.♘e5? ♗e6 14.f3 ♘f6, with the threat 15…d4 followed by …♘d5-e3, or 13.c3! a5 14.♘d4 and White stands better.

13.♞e5! 0-0!

Mistaken of course would be 13…g4? 14.♘d7 d4 15.b4 ♗xb4 16.♕xd4, when White wins a piece. After the text move the critical position is reached.



14.hxg5!

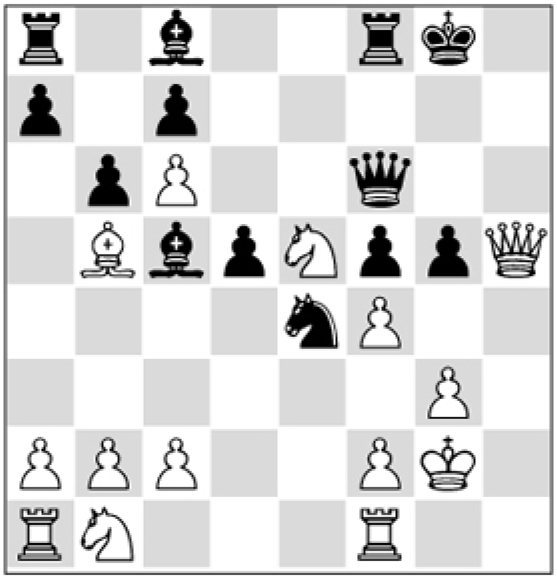
The logical move. The immediate 14.♕h5 would fail to the piquant counter 14…♕e8 15.♕xh6? ♖f6, so the queen at h5 should be protected with ♖h1 – therefore 14.hxg5 hxg5 15.♕h5 ♕e8 16.♖h1. But the illogical move 14.f3 (i.e., the anti-positional blocking of the important diagonal d1-h5) would have led to most lively play: 14.f3 ♘d6! 15.♕xd5+ ♔h7 16.hxg5! (16.♘c3 ♘xb5 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 18.♘xb5 ♖d2+ gives White only a draw) 16…♘xb5 17.♘c3! ♘xc3?

18.♖h1! and wins; e.g., 18…♕f6 (mate in three moves was threatened) 19.gxf5 ♘xd5 20.♖xh6+ and mate in a few moves.

After 14.f3 ♘d6 15.♕xd5+ ♔h7 16.hxg5 ♘xb5 17.♘c3, instead of playing 17…♘xc3, Black could exchange queens: 17…♕xd5 18.♘xd5. The position would then be difficult; thus, for example, 18…hxg5 would lead to White taking over the attack with 19.♖h1+ ♔g7 20.♖h5. But with 18…♖h8! a tenacious resistance could be organized. For instance, 19.a4 (19.♘f7? ♗e6! 20.♘xh8 ♗xd5, etc.) 19…♘d4 20.♘xc7 ♖b8 21.♖h1 ♔g7 22.gxh6+ ♔h7 (but not 22…♖xh6 because of the interpolated knight check at e8, with an exchange of rooks and mate: 23.♘e8+ ♔h7 24.♖xh6+ ♔xh6 25.♖h1#!) 23.♘d5 ♖f8 (mate was threatened) 24.c3, when a win for White will still require a lot of work.

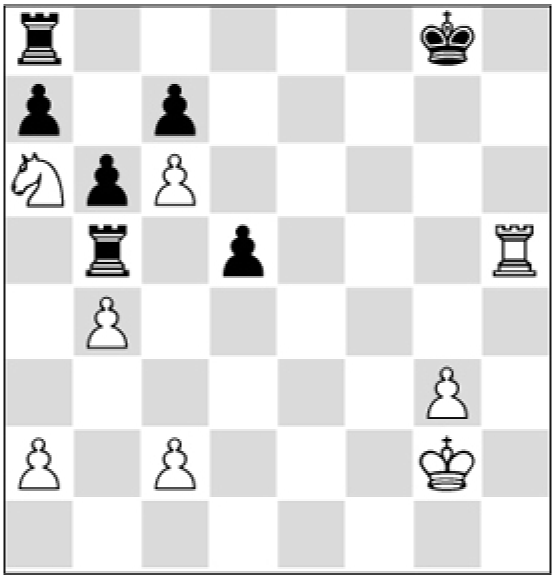
The logical text move was therefore to be preferred, which of course does not occasion any surprise, for even in fantastical positions, Logos rules.

14…hxg5 15.♕h5 ♕f6



16.f3!

Brings the haunting to an end! White has no fear of the ghost 16…gxf4 17.fxe4 ♕xe5, for then the simple 18.♘c3! would follow, when the white e-pawn is taboo! On 18…♖f7, which was thought to be sufficient in some quarters, White would play 19.♖xf4; now Black must meekly hold back his trump card, for 19…♖h7 would have brought on the catastrophic 20.♖g4+ ♔h8 21.♕xh7+. He would have nothing better, therefore, than the developing move 19…♗e6!. The win could then be forced through the following study-like maneuver: 20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.♖h1 (threatening 22.♖xf5!) 21…♗e4+ (Black now has to seek simplification!) 22.♘xe4 ♕xh5 23.♖xh5 ♖xf4 24.♘xc5 ♖b4 25.♘a6 ♖xb5 26.b4!! and wins. This quite uncommon position deserves a diagram:



(analysis diagram, after 26.b4!!)

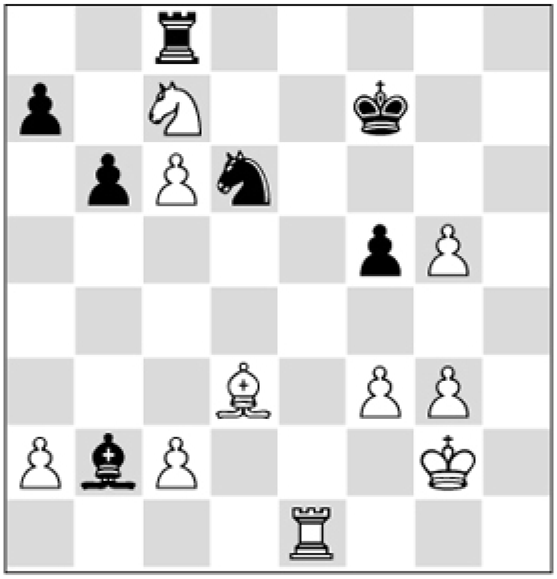
But by no means 26.♘xc7? because 26…♖xb2 27.♘xa8 ♖xc2+ 28.♔f3 ♖xc6, winning the knight, would have led to a draw.

But in the game Black played the retreating move:

16…♘d6 17.♘c3 ♝e6 18.fxg5 ♛xe5 19.♕g6+ ♛g7 20.♕xe6+ ♛f7 21.♕xf7+ ♚xf7 22.♗d3 ♝d4

On 22…d4, 23.♘d5 would follow, with the threat 24.b4.

23.♘xd5 ♝xb2 24.♖ae1 ♜ae8 25.♘xc7 ♜xe1 26.♖xe1 ♜c8



27.♘d5!

More precise than 27.♘e6 ♖e8 28.c7 ♖xe6 29.♗c4. White has in mind a terrible stalemate of all the black pieces!

27…♖xc6 28.♖e7+

Black resigned, for after 28…♔g6 there would follow 29.♘f4+ ♔xg5 30.♖e6 ♗f6 31.c4! and Black succumbs to zugzwang. It seems to have been a matter of destiny in this game that the combinations could not be fully carried out; but who shall say that they did not nevertheless have a vital influence on the course of events?

To conclude this section, a short, exciting game that admittedly cannot lay claim to any particular soundness. Starting off, Black makes a perfectly correct combination, but then, to avoid the exchange of queens, he plunges into an adventure that might have turned out badly.

Game 109

Rudolf Spielmann
Aron Nimzowitsch
Stockholm 1920 (12)

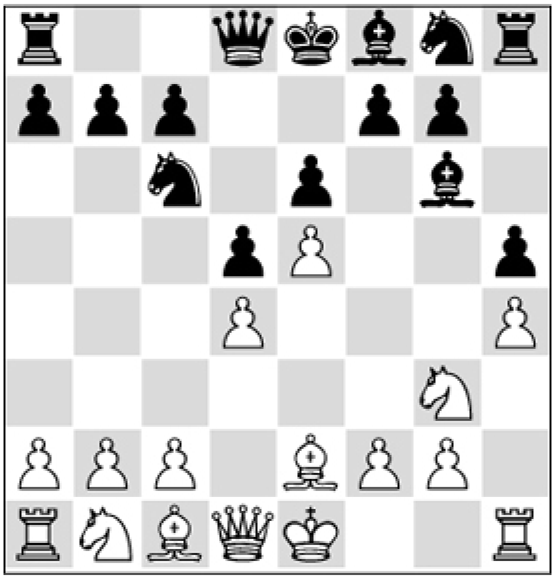
1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5

Simpler than 3…f6.

4.♘e2

4.♘f3 looks more natural.

4…e6 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h5 7.♗e2



7…♗e7

Now White’s maneuver is justified! But Black could have played more strongly, and in fact with 7…♘b4; e.g., 8.♘a3 c5 9.c3 ♘c6, when White’s efforts in the dispute for the h5-pawn appear to be a bit overdone in view of the serious situation in the center.

8.♗xh5 ♗xh5 9.♘xh5 g6 10.♘f4 ♖xh4 11.♖xh4 ♗xh4 12.♕d3

Preventing 12…♗g5, for then 13.♘xe6! would win.

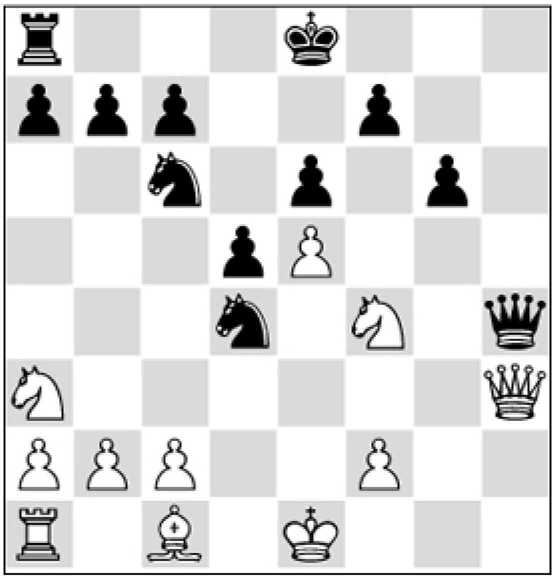
12…♘ge7!! 13.g3 ♘f5 14.gxh4 ♘fxd4

Now threatening both 15…♘b4 16.♕xd4 ♘xc2+ as well as 15…♘xe5 16.♕xd4 ♘f3+, a neat double twist.

15.♘a3 ♕xh4

15…♘xe5 would be simpler: 16.♕h3 ♘df3+ 17.♔f1 ♕xh4, with a promising ending, but Black wanted to avoid the exchange of queens.

16.♕h3



To force the queen trade.

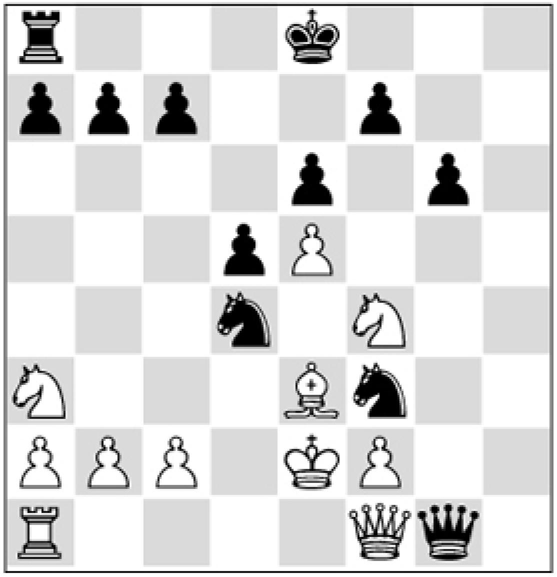
16…♛g5!?

With the idea 17.♕h8+ ♔d7 18.♕xa8 ♕g1+ 19.♔d2 ♕xf2+ 20.♔c3 ♘b3!! (after the game the alternative solution 20…♘f3 was found) Even so, 16… ♕xh3 was necessary.

17.♝e3?

For now 17.♘d3 could have been played, with advantage to White: 17…♕g1+ 18.♔d2 ♘xe5 19.♘xe5 ♕xf2+ would have been just as inadequate as the other possible continuation 17…♕g1+ 18.♔d2 ♔d7; e.g., 19.♘c5 (*not* 19.c3? because of 19…♖h8! 20.♕xh8 ♕g5+ with a perpetual check) 19…♔e7 20.♕h4+ ♔e8 (or 20…g5 21.♕g3) 21.♕h8+ ♔e7 22.♕f6+ and 23.c3.

17…♛g1+ 18.♛f1 ♞f3+ 19.♚e2 ♞fd4+ 20.♚d2 ♞f3+ 21.♚e2 ♞cd4+



22.♚d3

Ruinous. For better or worse, White should have gone in for 22.♗xd4 ♘xd4+ 23.♔d3 ♕g5, although his position then would not exactly have been enviable (24.♔xd4 ♕xf4+ 25.♔d3 c5).

22…♛g5 23.♛h3 ♛xe5 24.♜f1 0-0-0 25.b3 b5 26.♝xb5 ♛e4+ 27.♚c3 ♛xc2+ 28.♚b4 c5+

0-1

With this, we conclude the book and bid farewell to our hopefully sympathetic readers.

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